

STORY POEMS

FOR COMPOSITION

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

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STORY POEMS

FOR COMPOSITION

SELECTED AND ARRANGED

BY.

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TWELFTH EDITION

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INTRODUCTION.

It would probably be no exaggeration to say that the great majority of "English" lessons, given in England, tend to give the recipients, a dislike of the subject and a feeling that the work of great poets and prose-writers are things to be avoided. To the average English school-boy such are merely repositories of words to be parsed, sentences to be analysed, "allusions" to be learnt, "meanings" to be noted, "beauties" to be tabulated. He would as soon think of reading poetry voluntarily as of reading Euclid. The craze for educational "results" has rendered it imperative for the teacher to devote the English hour to things immaterial, worthless, and utterly dull; to exalt the letter far above the spirit; to ignore all that is not examinable, and to be examined. Unfortunately all that is of any real value in Literature is wholly unexaminable, and tens of thousands of pupils have, for examinations, "done" the masterpieces of English literature utterly untouched in soul and spirit, unwarmed and unflushed by the glowing tale of ardent aspirations or noble deeds set forth in burning words.

Yet surely Literature is for joy and ennoblement rather than for dissection, tabulation, analysis, parsing, annotation. Surely, the *idea* is the thing.

And if this is the state of the English pupil, what of that of the Indian student? However, we dwell in the day of the Examination (while hoping for the dawn of that of Education), and must strive to endow the pupil with that amount of knowledge and trickery that may hoodwink the examiner. Conscientious and able teachers can, nevertheless, combine Education with Instruction and contrive that the most successful class is not always the worst educated.

In the study of English poetry, it is possible to consider first the pupil and his development; secondly the poet and his theme, and lastly the examiner and his questions—to aim at awakening the imagination, at appealing to the higher instincts, satisfying the craving for, and love of, beauty, romance, adventure, and heroism of the pupil; at helping the poet to make clear his story and point his moral; and, lastly, at providing for the examiner his beloved facts and results.

It is possible to let the pupil get the interest, the amusement, the thrill, the lesson and the beauty of the poem first, for himself and his own benefit, before making him acquire the lesser things for the examiner's benefit.

One or two weary battered, hackneyed poems, parsed, analysed, paraphrased, and annotated to death for an examination, does not constitute a year's "literature" for a class.

Extensive is far better than *intensive* culture in this case; better the *story*, the joy, the thrill, the drama, of a score of poems than the weary hammering at the oft-repeated well-loathed one.

An excellent plan is to combine "literature" and composition, having the *story* of a suitable narrative poem told by the class (preferably orally), in its own words.

In the first place it is an infinitely preferable state of affairs that pupils should regard poems as treasure-houses of interesting tales, dramas, legends and stories, as records of adventure, heroism, great deeds and strange events, than as collections of material for dull and difficult feats of parsing, analysis, paraphrase and memorising. In the second place it is a training in "getting at the sense" of writings, of achieving a clear view and a firm grasp of what is set forth in metrical form, with a view to a simple telling of a plain tale.

It also, again, tends to keep before both class and teacher the oft-forgotten fact that, after all, the poem and its meaning is the important thing and not the hundred-and-one side-issues and secondary details—that to *enjoy* and *benefit by* the poem, is at least as important as to parse and analyse it; that literature is studied for the happiness, benefit, development, improvement and pleasure of the student and not solely to provide material for dull grammar lessons.

The best kind of poetry for boys and girls is narrative poetry, story-poems, in which the tale of brave and noble deeds is told. The simpler the diction the better. The story is the most important factor (in this case) and the story should be clear. The ideal poem for class use is that which tells a fine story finely, sets forth a brave tale in stirring words. Before the pupil can tell the tale in his own words he must have understood it, visualised it. If he tells it first in his own vernacular the teacher is in a position to know whether a faulty narration of it in English is due to lack of English or lack of understanding of the story. Obviously the first step is the perfectly clear comprehension of the events set forth in the poem.

Suppose the teacher wants a piece of composition written on the subject-matter of the poem "The Fall of D'Assas," which runs as follows:—

J THE FALL OF D'ASSAS.

Alone through gloomy forest-shades
A soldier went by night;
No moonbeam pierced the dusky glades,
No star shed guiding light.

Yet on his vigil's midnight round
The youth all cheerly passed;
Unchecked by aught of boding sound
That muttered in the blast.

Where were his thoughts that lonely hour?
—In his far home, perchance;
His father's hall, his mother's bower,
'Midst the gay vines of France:

Wandering from battles lost and won,
To hear and bless again
The rolling of the wide Garonne,
Or murmur of the Seine.

Hush! hark! did stealing steps go by?
Came not faint whispers near?
No! the wild wind hath many a sigh,
Amidst the foliage sere.

Hark, yet again!—and from his hand
What grasp hath wrenched the blade?
—Oh, single 'midst a hostile band,
Young soldier! thou'rt betrayed!

'Silence!' in undertones they cry,
'No whisper—not a breath!
The sound that warns thy comrades nigh
Shall sentence thee to death!'

Still, at the bayonet's point he stood,
And strong to meet the blow;
And shouted, 'midst his rushing blood,
'Arm, arm, Auvergne! the foe!'

The stir, the tramp, the bugle-call—
He heard their tumults grow;
And sent his dying voice through all—
'Auvergne, Auvergne! the foe!'

FELICIA HEMANS

His first step should be to read the poem through from beginning to end, as clearly, dramatically and impressively as possible. *Something* of the story will be comprehended by the dullest, if it be properly declaimed by the teacher. The next step must ensure complete comprehension by all.

This second step is the reading, by the teacher, of each verse separately, and the asking of a number of questions (after each verse) designed to show whether the class has grasped the meaning of the verse. There is no objection to the asking and answering of these questions in vernacular.

The teacher reads VERSE 1 and questions as follows :—

Who walked by night ?	<i>A soldier.</i>
Where did he walk ?	<i>Through a forest.</i>
What of the night ?	<i>It was dark and gloomy.</i>

It is clear so far, then, that a soldier was making his way through a gloomy forest on a very dark night.

The teacher reads VERSE 2 and questions class.

How did he go on his	<i>Cheerfully.</i>
round ?	

[The last two lines may require some explanation, which can, if necessary, be given in the vernacular.]

The second verse, then, shows that the young soldier went along cheerfully and was not alarmed by any noises.

VERSE 3.

Of what was he thinking ?	<i>Of his home in France and of his father and mother.</i>
---------------------------	--

VERSE 4.

From what did his	<i>From the battles in which</i>
thoughts turn ?	<i>he had taken part.</i>

To what did they wander? *To the Seine and Garonne,
rivers of France.*

VERSE 5.

What did he think he *Footsteps and whispers.*
heard?

What did he decide? *That it was only the sound
of the wind among the
trees.*

VERSE 6.

What was snatched from *His sword.*
his hand?

Where was he then? *Alone in the midst of a
band of his enemies.*

VERSE 7.

What did they command? *Silence!*

What would they do if he *Kill him.*
made a sound?

VERSE 8.

What did he do? *Shouted to his comrades that
the enemy was upon them.*

What did his enemies do? *Killed him with their bayo-
nets.*

VERSE 9.

What did he hear as he *The bugle-call and noises
lay dying? of preparation showing
that his comrades were
aroused.*

What did he do? *Again called a warning
to them with his dying
breath.*

Each verse having been elucidated, and the content of the previous one added, the story is complete by the time the last verse has been dealt with. If necessary the story may then be elicited in the vernacular.

Finally each boy must write the story in English, or contribute a portion orally as the class co-operates to tell the story orally.

The following poems are all more or less suitable for use as story-poems for composition as well as for recitation. Further, this collection of poems fills a marked and long-felt need. In the various lists of books prescribed in this country for non-detailed study, one does not find mention of any book of simple English poems likely to attract the Indian school-boy. What is wanted is a collection such as he can read without much difficulty and which will really interest him. It would be very instructive if one could have statistics as to the number of English poems voluntarily read by Indian school-boys. Probably it would be found that the number read in addition to those prescribed is exceedingly small.

It is hoped and believed that this collection may possibly do something towards remedying this deplorable state of affairs.

STORY POEMS.

I. THE BLIND MEN AND THE ELEPHANT

It was six men of Indostan,
To learning much inclined,
Who went to see the Elephant
(Though all of them were blind),
That each by observation
Might satisfy his mind.

The First approached the Elephant,
And, happening to fall
Against his broad and sturdy side,
At once began to bawl:
'God bless me! but the Elephant
Is very like a wall!'

The Second, feeling of the tusk,
Cried: 'Ho! what have we here
So very round and smooth and sharp?
To me 'tis mighty clear
This wonder of an Elephant
Is very like a spear!'

The Third approached the animal,
And, happening to take
The squirming trunk within his hands,
Thus boldly up and spake:
'I see,' quoth he, 'the Elephant
Is very like a snake!'

The Fourth reached out his eager hand,
And felt about the knee:
'What most this wondrous beast is like
Is mighty plain,' quoth he;
'Tis clear enough the Elephant
Is very like a tree!'

The Fifth, who chanced to touch the ear,
Said: 'E'en the blindest man
Can tell what this resembles most;
Deny the fact who can,
This marvel of an Elephant
Is very like a fan!'

The Sixth no sooner had begun
About the beast to grope,
Than, seizing on the swinging tail
That fell within his scope,
'I see,' quoth he, 'the Elephant
Is very like a rope!'

And so these men of Indostan
Disputed loud and long,
Each in his own opinion
Exceeding stiff and strong,
Though each was partly in the right
And all were in the wrong!

J. G. SAXE

2. THE MILKMAID

Once on a time a rustic dame,
(No matter for the lady's name)
Wrapt up in deep imagination,
Indulg'd her pleasing contemplation;
While on a bench she took her seat,
And plac'd the milk-pail at her feet.

Oft in her hand she chink'd the pence,
The profits which arose from thence;
While fond ideas filled her brain
Of layings up, and monstrous gain,
Till every penny which she told
Creative fancy turn'd to gold;
And reasoning thus from computation,
She spoke aloud her meditation.

'Please heaven but to preserve my health,
No doubt I shall have store of wealth;
It must of consequence ensue
I shall have store of lovers too.
O, how I'll break their stubborn hearts
With all the pride of female arts.
What suitors then will kneel before me!
Lords, Earls, and Viscounts shall adore me.
When in my gilded coach I ride,
My Lady, at his Lordship's side,
How will I laugh at all I meet
Clattering in pattens down the street!
And Lobbin then I'll mind no more,
Howe'er I lov'd him heretofore;
Or, if he talks of plighted truth,
I will not hear the simple youth,
But rise indignant from my seat,
And spurn the lubber from my feet.'

Action, alas! the speaker's grace,
Ne'er came in more improper place,
For in the tossing forth her shoe
What fancied bliss the maid o'erthrew!
While down at once, with hideous fall,
Came lovers, wealth, and milk, and all.

R. LLOYD

3. THE BOY AND HIS TOP

A little boy had bought a top,
The best in all the toyman's shop.
He made a whip with good eel's skin,
He lash'd the top and made it spin;
All the children within call,
And the servants, one and all,
Stood round to see it and admire.
At last the top began to tire.
He cried out, 'Pray, don't whip me, Master,
You whip too hard,—I can't spin faster;
I can spin quite as well without it.'
The little boy replied, 'I doubt it;
I only whip you for your good.
You were a foolish lump of wood.
By dint of whipping you were raised
To see yourself admired and praised,
And if I left you, you'd remain
A foolish lump of wood again.'

EXPLANATION.

Whipping sounds a little odd;
I don't mean whipping with a rod;
It means to teach a boy incessantly,
Whether by lessons or more pleasantly,
Every hour and every day,
By every means in every way,
By reading, writing, rhyming, talking,
By riding to see sights, and walking:
If you leave off he drops at once,
A lumpish, wooden-headed dunce.

J. H. FRERE

4. THE TURKEY AND THE ANT

A Turkey, tired of common food,
Forsook the barn, and sought the wood;
Behind her ran an infant train,
Collecting here and there a grain.
'Draw near, my birds,' the mother cries,
'This hill delicious fare supplies.
Behold the busy negro race,—
See, millions blacken all the place!
Fear not; like me with freedom eat;
An ant is most delightful meat.
How blest, how envied, were our life,
Could we but 'scape the poulterer's knife!
But man, cursed man, on turkeys preys,
And Christmas shortens all our days.
Sometimes with oysters we combine,
Sometimes assist the savoury chine:
From the low peasant to the lord,
The turkey smokes on every board.
Some men for gluttony are curst,
Of the seven deadly sins the worst.'

An ant, who climbed beyond her reach,
Thus answer'd from a neighbouring beech;
'Ere you remark another's sin,
Bid thy own conscience look within:
Control thy more voracious bill,
Nor, for a breakfast, nations kill.'

J. GAY

5. CASABIANCA

The boy stood on the burning deck,
Whence all but he had fled;
The flame that lit the battle's wreck
Shone round him o'er the dead.

Yet beautiful and bright he stood,
As born to rule the storm;
A creature of heroic blood,
A proud, though childlike form.

The flames rolled on—he would not go
Without his father's word;
That father, faint in death below,
His voice no longer heard.

He called aloud: 'Say, father, say
If yet my task is done?'
He knew not that the chieftain lay
Unconscious of his son.

'Speak, father!' once again he cried,
'If I may yet be gone!'
—And but the booming shots replied,
And fast the flames rolled on.

Upon his brow he felt their breath,
And in his waving hair;
And looked from that lone post of death,
In still, yet brave despair.

And shouted but once more aloud,
'My father! must I stay?'
While o'er him fast, through sail and shroud,
The wreathing fires made way.

They wrapt the ship in splendour wild,
They caught the flag on high,
And streamed above the gallant child,
Like banners in the sky.

There came a burst of thunder sound—
The boy—oh! where was he?
—Ask of the winds that far around
With fragments strewed the sea!—

With mast, and helm, and pennon fair,
That well had borne their part;
But the noblest thing which perish'd there
Was that young faithful heart.

FELICIA HEMANS

6. GEORGE AND THE CHIMNEY-SWEEP

His petticoats now George cast off,
For he was four years old;
His trousers were nankeen so fine,
His buttons bright as gold.
'May I,' said little George, 'go out,
My pretty clothes to show?
May I, papa? may I, mamma?'
The answer was—'No, no.'

'Go, run below, George, in the court,
But go not in the street,
Lest naughty boys should play some trick,
Or gipsies you should meet.'
Yet, tho' forbad, George went unseen,
That other boys might spy;
And all admir'd him when he lisp'd—
'Now, who so fine as I?'

But whilst he strutted to and fro,
So proud, as I've heard tell,
A sweep-boy pass'd, whom to avoid
He slipp'd, and down he fell.
The sooty lad was kind and good,
To Georgy boy he ran,
He rais'd him up, and kissing, said,
'Hush, hush, my little man!'

He rubb'd and wip'd his clothes with care,
And hugging, said, 'Don't cry!
Go home as quick as you can go;
Sweet little boy, good bye.'
Poor George look'd down, and lo! his dress
Was blacker than before;
All over soot, and mud, and dirt,
He reach'd his father's door.

He sobb'd, and wept, and look'd asham'd,
His fault he did not hide;
And since so sorry for his fault,
Mamma forbore to chide.
That night, when he was gone to bed,
He jump'd up in his sleep,
And cried and sobb'd, and cried again,
'I thought I saw the sweep!'

ADELAIDE O'KEEFFE

7. MEDDLESOME MATTY

One ugly trick has often spoiled
The sweetest and the best;
Matilda, though a pleasant child,
One ugly trick possessed,
Which, like a cloud before the skies,
Hid all her better qualities.

Sometimes she'd lift the tea-pot lid,
To peep at what was in it;
Or tilt the kettle, if you did
But turn your back a minute.
In vain you told her not to touch,
Her trick of meddling grew so much.

Her grandpapa went out one day,
And by mistake he laid
His spectacles and snuff-box gay
Too near the little maid;
'Ah! well,' thought she, 'I'll try them on,
As soon as grandpapa is gone.'

Forthwith she placed upon her nose
The glasses large and wide;
And looking round, as I suppose,
The snuff-box too she spied:
'Oh! what a pretty box is that;
I'll open it,' said little Matt.

'I know that grandpapa would say,
"Don't meddle with it, dear";
But, then, he's far enough away,
And no one else is near:
Besides, what can there be amiss
In opening such a box as this?'

So thumb and finger went to work
To move the stubborn lid,
And presently a mighty jerk
The mighty mischief did;
For all at once, ah! woeful case,
The snuff came puffing in her face.

Poor eyes, and nose, and mouth, beside,
A dismal sight presented;
In vain, as bitterly she cried,
Her folly she repented.
In vain she ran about for ease;
She could do nothing now but sneeze.

She dashed the spectacles away,
To wipe her tingling eyes,
And as in twenty bits they lay,
Her grandpapa she spies.
'Heyday! and what's the matter now?'
Says grandpapa with lifted brow.

Matilda, smarting with the pain,
And tingling still, and sore,
Made many a promise to refrain
From meddling evermore.
And 'tis fact, as I have heard,
She ever since has kept her word.

ANN TAYLOR

8. ALICE FELL

The post-boy drove with fierce career,
For threatening clouds the moon had drown'd:
When, as we hurried on, my ear
Was smitten with a startling sound.

As if the wind blew many ways,
I heard the sound,—and more and more;
It seemed to follow with the chaise,
And still I heard it as before.

At length I to the boy call'd out;
He stopped his horses at the word,
But neither cry, nor voice, nor shout,
Nor aught else like it, could be heard.

The boy then smacked his whip, and fast
The horses scamper'd through the rain
But hearing soon upon the blast
The cry, I made him halt again.

Forthwith alighting on the ground,
'Whence comes,' said I, 'this piteous moan?'
And there a little girl I found,
Sitting behind the chaise alone.

'My cloak!' no other word she spake,
But loud and bitterly she wept,
As if her innocent heart would break;
And down from off her seat she leapt.

'What ails you, child?'—She sobb'd, 'Look here!'
I saw it in the wheel entangled,
A weather-beaten rag as e'er
From any garden scarecrow dangled.

There, twisted between nave and spoke,
It hung, nor could at once be freed;
But our joint pains unloosed the cloak,
A miserable rag indeed!

'And whither are you going, child,
To-night, along these lonesome ways?'
'To Durham,' answered she, half wild—
'Then come with me into the chaise.'

Insensible to all relief
Sat the poor girl, and forth did send
Sob after sob, as if her grief
Could never, never have an end.

'My child, in Durham do you dwell?'
She check'd herself in her distress,
And said, 'My name is Alice Fell;
'I'm fatherless and motherless.

'And I to Durham, sir, belong.'
Again, as if the thought would choke
Her very heart, her grief grew strong;
And all was for her tatter'd cloak!

The chaise drove on ; our journey's end
Was nigh ; and, sitting by my side,
As if she had lost her only friend,
She wept, nor would be pacified.

Up to the tavern-door we post ;
Of Alice and her grief I told,
And I gave money to the host,
To buy a new cloak for the old.

' And let it be of duffil gray,
As warm a cloak as man can sell !'
—Proud creature was she the next day,
The little orphan, Alice Fell !

W. WORDSWORTH

9. THE INCHCAPE ROCK

No stir in the air, no stir in the sea,
The ship was as still as she could be ;
Her sails from heaven received no motion,
Her keel was steady in the ocean.

Without either sign or sound of their shock
The waves flow'd over the Inchcape Rock ;
So little they rose, so little they fell,
They did not move the Inchcape Bell.

The good old Abbot of Aberbrothok
Had placed that bell on the Inchcape Rock ;
On a buoy in the storm it floated and swung,
And over the waves its warning rung.

When the Rock was hid by the surge's swell,
The mariners heard the warning bell ;
And then they knew the perilous Rock,
And blest the Abbot of Aberbrothok.

The sun in heaven was shining gay,
All things were joyful on that day;
The sea-birds scream'd as they wheel'd around,
And there was joyance in the sound.

The buoy of the Inchcape Bell was seen
A darker speck on the ocean green;
Sir Ralph the Rover walk'd his deck,
And he fixed his eye on the darker speck.

He felt the cheering power of spring;
It made him whistle, it made him sing;
His heart was mirthful to excess,
But the Rover's mirth was wickedness.

His eye was on the Inchcape float;
Quoth he, 'My men, put out the boat,
And row me to the Inchcape Rock,
And I'll plague the Abbot of Aberbrothok.'

The boat is lower'd, the boatmen row,
And to the Inchcape Rock they go;
Sir Ralph bent over from the boat,
And he cut the bell from the Inchcape float.

Down sank the bell with a gurgling sound,
The bubbles rose and burst around;
Quoth Sir Ralph, 'The next who comes to the Rock
Won't bless the Abbot of Aberbrothok.'

Sir Ralph the Rover sail'd away;
He scour'd the seas for many a day;
And now, grown rich with plunder'd store,
He steers his course for Scotland's shore.

So thick a haze o'erspreads the sky
They cannot see the sun on high;
The wind hath blown a gale all day,
At evening it hath died away.

On the deck the Rover takes his stand;
So dark it is they see no land.
Quoth Sir Ralph, 'It will be lighter soon,
For there is the dawn of the rising moon.'

'Canst hear,' said one, 'the breakers roar?
For methinks we should be near the shore.'
'Now where we are I cannot tell,
But I wish I could hear the Inchcape Bell.'

They hear no sound, the swell is strong;
Though the wind hath fallen, they drift along
Till the vessel strikes with a shivering shock,—
'O horror! It is the Inchcape Rock.'

Sir Ralph the Rover tore his hair;
He curst himself in his despair;
The waves rush in on every side,
The ship is sinking beneath the tide.

But even in his dying fear
One dreadful sound could the Rover hear,
A sound as if with the Inchcape Bell
The fiends below were ringing his knell.

R. SOUTHEY

10. KING BRUCE AND THE SPIDER

King Bruce of Scotland flung himself down
In a lonely mood to think;
'Tis true he was monarch and wore a crown
But his heart was beginning to sink.

For he had been trying to do a great deed,
To make his people glad;
He had tried and tried, but couldn't succeed,
And so he became quite sad.

He flung himself down in low despair,
As grieved as man could be:
And after a while he pondered there,—
'I'll give it all up,' said he.

Now just at the moment a spider dropped,
With its silken filmy clew;
And the king in the midst of his thinking stopped,
To see what the spider would do.

'Twas a long way up to the ceiling dome,
And it hung by a rope so fine,
That how it would get to its cobweb home
King Bruce could not divine.

It soon began to cling and crawl
Straight up with strong endeavour;
But down it came with a slipping sprawl,
As near to the ground as ever.

Up, up it ran, nor a second did stay,
To utter the least complaint,
Till it fell still lower; and there it lay
A little dizzy and faint.

Its head grew steady—again it went,
And travelled a half yard higher;
'Twas a delicate thread it had to tread,
And a road where its feet would tire.

Again it fell, and swung below
But up it quickly mounted,
Till up and down, now fast, now slow,
Nine brave attempts were counted.

'Sure,' said the king, 'that foolish thing
Will strive no more to climb,
When it toils so hard to reach and cling,
And tumbles every time.'

But up the insect went once more ;
Ah me ! 'tis an anxious minute :
He's only a foot from his cobweb door ;
Oh, say, will he lose or win it ?

Steadily, steadily, inch by inch,
Higher and higher he got,
And a bold little run at the very last pinch
Put him into his native cot.

'Bravo! bravo!' the king cried out ;
'All honour to those who try ;
The spider up there defied despair ;
He conquered, and why should not I ?'

And Bruce of Scotland braced his mind,
And gossips tell the tale,
That he tried once more as he tried before,
And that time he did not fail.

Pay goodly heed, all ye who read,
And beware of saying, 'I can't' ;
'Tis a cowardly word, and apt to lead
To idleness, folly and want.

Whenever you find your heart despair
Of doing some goodly thing,
Con over this strain, try bravely again,
And remember the Spider and King.

ELIZA COOK

II. THE STORY OF CINDERELLA

There was once a merchant,
In a splendid town,
A great and noble merchant,
Of wealth and good renown.

He married a good lady—
 They were a happy pair;
 But the lady died, and left him
 A little daughter fair.

And now the merchant married
 A proud and haughty dame,
 And two ill-tempered daughters
 With this proud lady came.

They scorned their little sister;
 To the poor child they gave
 The name of Cinderella,
 And used her like a slave.

The Prince soon gave a party,
 The sisters to it went;
 To leave poor Cinderella
 At home was their intent.

But a kind-hearted Fairy
 Sent Cinderella too,
 And gave her bright glass slippers,
 All sparkling, fair, and new.

The Prince saw Cinderella,
 Who looked so fresh and bright,
 That he admired her greatly,
 And danced with her all night.

But when the clock struck twelve, then
 She quickly hied away,
 Because the Fairy told her,
 She must not longer stay.

Next night, again, her sisters
 Were at the royal ball,
 But the Prince saw Cinderella,
 And liked her more than all.

He danced with her so gladly:
He tried to have her name;
But not one guest could tell it,
Or knew from whence she came.

When twelve o'clock was striking,
Again she fled in haste,
But dropped one little slipper,
In her hurry as she passed.

The Prince picked up the slipper
And a herald sent next day,
To say, 'She, whom it fitted,
Should be his bride so gay.'

Her sisters tried the slipper,
But it would not fit, although
One crushed her heel in trying,
And one cut off her toe.

But Cinderella tried it,
As calmly as you please,
And all were much astonished,
It fitted her with ease.

Her sisters stood dumbfounded,
And still their wonder grew,
When coolly from her pocket
She drew the other shoe.

The Prince he heard the story,
And he was satisfied;
He said, 'The slipper fits you,
And you shall be my bride.'

And to her haughty sisters
She proved a real friend;
And now of Cinderella
The tale is at an end.

12. THE BEGGAR MAID

Her arms across her breast she laid;
She was more fair than words can say:
Bare-footed came the beggar maid
Before the king Cophetua.
In robe and crown the king stepped down,
To meet and greet her on her way;
'It is no wonder,' said the lords,
'She is more beautiful than day.'

As shines the moon in clouded skies,
She in her poor attire was seen:
One praised her ankles, one her eyes,
One her dark hair and lovesome mien.
So sweet a face, such angel grace,
In all that land had never been:
Cophetua sware a royal oath:
'This beggar maid shall be my queen!'

A. TENNYSON

13. THE CHILD AND THE SNAKE

Henry was every morning fed
With a full mess of milk and bread.
One day the boy his breakfast took,
And ate it by a purling brook.
His mother lets him have his way.
With free leave Henry every day
Thither repairs, until she heard
Him talking of a fine *gray bird*.
This pretty bird, he said, indeed,
Came every day with him to feed;
And it loved him and loved his milk,
And it was smooth and soft like silk.

—On the next morn she follows Harry,
And carefully she sees him carry
Through the long grass his heap'd-up mess.
What was her terror and distress,
When she saw the infant take
His bread and milk close to a snake!
Upon the grass he spreads his feast,
And sits down by his frightful guest,
Who had waited for the treat;
And now they both begin to eat.
Fond mother! shriek not; O beware
The least small noise, O have a care—
The least small noise that may be made
The wily snake will be afraid—
If he hear the slightest sound,
He will inflict th' envenom'd wound.
—She speaks not, moves not, scarce does breathe
As she stands the trees beneath.
No sound she utters; and she soon
Sees the child lift up his spoon,
And tap the snake upon the head,
Fearless of harm; and then he said,
As speaking to familiar mate,
'Keep on your own side, do, Gray Pate';
The snake then to the other side,
As one rebukéd, seems to glide;
And now again advancing nigh,
Again she hears the infant cry,
Tapping the snake, 'Keep further, do;
'Mind, Gray Pate, what I say to you.'
The danger's o'er! she sees the boy
(O what a change from fear to joy!)
Rise and bid the snake 'Good-bye';
Says he, 'Our breakfast's done, and I
'Will come again to-morrow day';
— Then, lightly tripping, ran away.

MARY LAMB

14. ANDROCLES AND THE LION

Androcles from his injur'd lord, in dread
Of instant death, to Lybia's desert fled.
Tir'd with his toilsome flight, and parch'd with heat,
He spied, at length, a cavern's cool retreat.
But scarce had giv'n to rest his weary frame,
When, hugest of his kind, a lion came:
He roar'd approaching; but the savage din
To plaintive murmurs chang'd,—arriv'd within,
And with expressive looks, his lifted paw
Presenting, aid implor'd from whom he saw;
The fugitive, through terror at a stand,
Dar'd not awhile afford his trembling hand,
But bolder grown at length, inherent found
A pointed thorn, and drew it from the wound.
The cure was wrought; he wip'd the sanious blood,
And firm and free from pain the lion stood.
Again he seeks the wilds, and day by day
Regales his inmate with the parted prey;
Nor he disdains the dole, though unprepar'd,
Spread on the ground, and with a lion shar'd.
But thus to live—still lost, sequester'd still—
Scarce seem'd his lord's revenge and heavier ill.
Home, native home!—Oh might he but repair!
He must, he will, though death attends him there.
He goes, and doom'd to perish, on the sands
Of the full theatre unpitied stands!
When lo! the self-same lion from his cage
Flies to devour him, famish'd into rage.
He flies, but viewing in his purpos'd prey
The man, his healer, pauses on his way,
And soften'd by remembrance into sweet
And kind composure, crouches at his feet.
Mute with astonishment th' assembly gaze;
But why, ye Romans? Whence your mute amaze?
All this is nat'ral:—nature bade him rend
An enemy; she bids him spare a friend.

W. COWPER

15. LOCHINVAR

O, young Lochinvar is come out of the west,
Through all the wide Border his steed was the best;
And save his good broadsword he weapons had none,
He rode all unarm'd, and he rode all alone.
So faithful in love, and so dauntless in war,
There never was knight like the young Lochinvar.

He stay'd not for brake and he stopp'd not for stone,
He swam the Eske river where ford there was none;
But ere he alighted at Netherby gate,
The bride had consented, the gallant came late:
For a laggard in love, and a dastard in war,
Was to wed the fair Ellen of brave Lochinvar.

So boldly he enter'd the Netherby Hall,
Among bride's-men, and kinsmen, and brothers, and all;
Then spoke the bride's father, his hand on his sword,
(For the poor craven bridegroom said never a word,)
'O come ye in peace here, or come ye in war,
Or to dance at our bridal, young Lord Lochinvar?'

'I long woo'd your daughter, my suit you denied;—
Love swells like the Solway, but ebbs like its tide—
And now am I come, with this lost love of mine,
To lead but one measure, drink one cup of wine.
There are maidens in Scotland more lovely by far,
That would gladly be bride to the young Lochinvar.'

The bride kiss'd the goblet; the knight took it up,
He quaff'd off the wine, and he threw down the cup.
She look'd down to blush, and she look'd up to sigh,
With a smile on her lips, and a tear in her eye.
He took her soft hand, ere her mother could bar,—
'Now tread we a measure!' said young Lochinvar,

So stately his form, and so lovely her face,
That never a hall such a galliard did grace;
While her mother did fret, and her father did fume,
And the bridegroom stood dangling his bonnet and plume;
And the bride-maidens whisper'd, 'Twere better by far,
To have match'd our fair cousin with young Lochinvar.'

One touch to her hand, and one word in her ear,
When they reach'd the hall door, and the charger stood near;
So light to the croupe the fair lady he swung,
So light to the saddle before her he sprung!
'She is won! we are gone, over bank, bush, and scaur;
They'll have fleet steeds that follow,' quoth young Lochinvar.

There was mounting 'mong Græmes of the Netherby clan;
Forsters, Fenwicks, and Musgraves, they rode and they ran:
There was racing and chasing on Cannobie Lee,
But the lost bride of Netherby ne'er did they see.
So daring in love, and so dauntless in war,
Have ye e'er heard of gallant like young Lochinvar?

SIR W. SCOTT

✓ 16. POCAHONTAS

Wearied arm and broken sword
Wage in vain the desperate fight;
Round him press a countless horde,
He is but a single knight.
Hark a cry of triumph shrill
Through the wilderness resounds,
As with twenty bleeding wounds
Sinks the warrior fighting still.

Now they heap the fatal pyre,
And the torch of death they light;
Ah! 'tis hard to die of fire!
Who will shield the captive knight?
Round the stake with fiendish cry
Wheel and dance the savage crowd,
Cold the victim's mien and proud,
And his breast is bared to die.

Who will shield the fearless heart?
Who avert the murderous blade?
From the throng, with sudden start,
See there springs an Indian maid.
Quick she stands before the knight:
'Loose the chain, unbind the ring;
I am daughter of the King,
And I claim the Indian right!'

Dauntlessly aside she flings
Lifted axe and thirsty knife;
Fondly to his heart she clings,
And her bosom guards his life!
In the wood of Powhattan,
Still 'tis told, by Indian fires,
How a daughter of their sires
Saved the captive Englishman.

W. M. THACKERAY

117. BARBARA FRIETCHIE

Up from the meadows rich with corn,
Clear in the cool September morn,

The clustered spires of Frederick stand,
Green-walled by the hills of Maryland.

Round about them orchards sweep,
Apple and peach tree fruited deep,

Fair as a garden of the Lord
To the eyes of the famished rebel horde,

On that pleasant morn of the early fall,
When Lee marched over the mountain wall —

Over the mountains winding down,
Horse and foot into Frederick town.

Forty flags with their silver stars,
Forty flags with their crimson bars,

Flapped in the morning wind; the sun
Of noon looked down, and saw not one.

Up rose old Barbara Frietchie then,
Bowed with her fourscore years and ten;

Bravest of all in Frederick town,
She took up the flag the men hauled down;

In her attic window the staff she set,
To show that one heart was loyal yet.

Up the street came the rebel tread,
Stonewall Jackson riding ahead.

Under his slouched hat left and right
He glanced; the old flag met his sight.

‘Halt!’—the dust-brown ranks stood fast.
‘Fire!’—out blazed the rifle-blast.

It shivered the window, pane, and sash;
It rent the banner with seam and gash.

Quick, as it fell, from the broken staff
Dame Barbara snatched the silken scarf;

She leaned far out on the window-sill,
And shook it forth with a royal will.

'Shoot, if you must, this old grey head,
But spare your country's flag,' she said.

A shade of sadness, a blush of shame,
Over the face of the leader came:

The nobler nature within him stirred
To life at that woman's deed and word:

'Who touches a hair of yon grey head
Dies like a dog! March on!' he said.

All day long through Frederick Street
Sounded the tread of marching feet:

All day long that free flag tost
Over the heads of the rebel host.

Ever its torn folds rose and fell'
On the loyal winds that loved it well;

And through the hill-gaps sunset light
Shone over it with a warm good night.

Barbara Frietchie's work is o'er,
And the Rebel rides on his raids no more.

Honour to her! and let a tear
Fall, for her sake, on Stonewall's bier.

Over Barbara Frietchie's grave,
Flag of Freedom and Union, wave!

Peace and order and beauty draw
Round thy symbol of light and law ;

And ever the stars above look down
On thy stars below in Frederick town.

J. G. WHITTIER

18. THE PARROT

The deep affections of the breast,
That Heaven to living things imparts,
Are not exclusively possess'd
By human hearts.

A parrot, from the Spanish main,
Full young and early caged, came o'er,
With bright wings, to the bleak domain
Of Mulla's shore.

To spicy groves where he had won
His plumage of resplendent hue,
His native fruits, and skies, and sun,
He bade adieu.

For these he changed the smoke of turf,
A heathery land and misty sky,
And turn'd on rocks and raging surf
His golden eye.

But petted in our climate cold,
He lived and chatter'd many a day :
Until with age, from green and gold
His wings grew gray.

At last when blind, and seeming dumb,
He scolded, laugh'd, and spoke no more.
A Spanish stranger chanced to come
To Mulla's shore ;

He hail'd the bird in Spanish speech,
The bird in Spanish speech replied ;
Flapp'd round the cage with joyous screech
Dropt down, and died.

T. CAMPBELL

19. THE MOUNTAIN AND THE SQUIRREL

The mountain and the squirrel
Had a quarrel,
And the former called the latter 'Little prig.'
Bun replied,
'You are doubtless very big ;
But all sorts of things and weather
Must be taken in together,
To make up a year
And a sphere.
And I think it no disgrace
To occupy my place.
If I'm not so large as you,
You are not so small as I,
And not half so spry :
I'll not deny you make
A very pretty squirrel track.
Talents differ ; all is well and wisely put ;
If I cannot carry forests on my back,
Neither can you crack a nut.'

R. W. EMERSON

20. ABOU BEN ADHEM

ABOU Ben Adhem (may his tribe increase)
Awoke one night from a deep dream of peace,
And saw, within the moonlight in his room,
Making it rich, and like a lily in bloom,
An angel writing in a book of gold,

Exceeding peace had made Ben Adhem bold,
And to the presence in the room he said,
'What writest thou?'—The vision raised its head,
And, with a look made of all sweet accord,
Answered, 'The names of those who love the Lord.'
'And is mine one?' said Abou. 'Nay, not so,'
Replied the Angel. Abou spoke more low,
But cheerly still, and said, 'I pray thee, then,
Write me as one that loves his fellow men.'

The angel wrote, and vanish'd. The next night
It came again with a great waking light,
And show'd the names whom love of God had bless'd,
And lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest.

J. H. LEIGH HUNT

21. INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP

You know, we French stormed Ratisbon :
A mile or so away,
On a little mound, Napoleon
Stood on our storming-day ;
With neck out-thrust, you fancy how,
Legs wide, arms locked behind,
As if to balance the prone brow
Oppressive with its mind.

Just as perhaps he mused 'My plans
That soar, to earth may fall,
Let once my army-leader Lannes
Waver at yonder wall,'—
Out 'twixt the battery-smokes there flew
A rider, bound on bound
Full-galloping ; nor bridle drew
Until he reached the mound.

Then off there flung in smiling joy,
And held himself erect
By just his horse's mane, a boy :
You hardly could suspect—
(So tight he kept his lips compressed,
Scarce any blood came thro')
You looked twice ere you saw his breast
Was all but shot in two.

'Well,' cried he, 'Emperor, by God's grace
We've got you Ratisbon!
The Marshal's in the market-place,
And you'll be there anon
To see your flag-bird flap his vans
Where 'I, to heart's desire,
Perched him!' The chief's eye flashed; his plans
Soared up again like fire.

The chief's eye flashed; but presently
Softened itself, as sheathes
A film the mother-eagle's eye
When her bruised eaglet breathes;
'You're wounded!' 'Nay,' the soldier's pride
Touched to the quick, he said:
'I'm killed, Sire!' And his chief beside
Smiling the boy fell dead.

R. BROWNING

22. THE RED THREAD OF HONOUR

Eleven men of England
A breast-work charged in vain;
Eleven men of England
Lie stripped and gashed and slain,—
Slain, but of foes that guarded
Their rock-built fortress well,
Some twenty had been mastered
When the last soldier fell.

Whilst Napier piloted his wondrous way
Across the sand-waves of the desert sea,
Then flashed at once on each fierce clan dismay,
Lord of their wild Truckee.

These missed the glen to which their steps were bent,
Mistook a mandate, from afar half heard,
And in that glorious error calmly went
To death without a word.

The robber-chief mused deeply
Above those daring dead :
'Bring here,' at length he shouted,
'Bring quick the battle-thread,
Let Eblis blast for ever
Their souls if Allah will ;
But we must keep unbroken
The old rules of the Hill.

'Before the Ghuznee tiger
Leaped forth to burn and slay,
Before the holy Prophet
Taught our grim tribes to pray,
Before Secunder's lances
Pierced through each Indian glen,
The mountain laws of honour
Were framed for fearless men.

'Still, when a chief dies bravely,
We bind with green one wrist—
Green for the brave, for heroes
One crimson thread we twist.
Say ye, oh gallant Hillmen,
For these, whose life has fled,
Which is the fitting colour,
The green one, or the red?'

'Our brethren, laid in honoured graves, may wear
Their green reward,' each noble savage said;
'To these, whom hawks and hungry wolves shall tear,
Who dares deny the red?'

Thus conquering hate, and steadfast to the right,
Fresh from the heart that haughty verdict came;
Beneath a waning moon each spectral height
Rolled back its loud acclaim.

Once more the chief gazed keenly
Down on those daring dead;
From his good sword their heart's blood
Crept to that crimson thread.
Once more he cried: 'The judgment,
Good friends, is wise and true,
But though the red be given,
Have we not more to do?

'These were not stirred by anger,
Nor yet by lust made bold;
Renown they thought above them,
Nor did they look for gold.
To them their leader's signal
Was as the voice of God;
Unmoved and uncomplaining,
The path it showed they trod.

'As, without sound or struggle,
The stars unhurrying march,
Where Allah's finger guides them,
Through yonder purple arch,
These Franks, sublimely silent,
Without a quickened breath,
Went, in the strength of duty,
Straight to their goal of death.

'If I were now to ask you
 To name our bravest man,
 Ye all at once would answer,
 They called him Mehrab Khan,
 He sleeps among his fathers,
 Dear to our native land,
 With the bright mark he bled for,
 Firm round his faithful hand.

'The songs they sing of Roostum
 Fill all the past with light;
 If truth be in their music,
 He was a noble knight.
 But were these heroes living
 And strong for battle still,
 Would Mehrab Khan or Roostum
 Have climbed, like these, the hill?'

And they replied: 'Though Mehrab Khan was brave,
 As chief he chose himself what risks to run;
 Prince Roostum lied; his forfeit life to save,
 Which these had never done!'

'Enough!' he shouted fiercely;
 'Doomed though they be to hell,
 Bind fast the crimson trophy
 Round both wrists,—bind it well.
 Who knows but that great Allah
 May grudge such matchless men,
 With none so decked in heaven,
 To the fiends' flaming den?'

Then all those gallant robbers
 Shouted a stern 'Amen!'
 They raised the slaughtered sergeant,
 They raised his mangled ten.
 And when we found their bodies
 Left bleaching in the wind,
 Around both wrists in glory
 That crimson thread was twined.

Then Napier's knightly heart, touched to the core,
Rang like an echo to that knightly deed;
He bade its memory live for evermore,
That those who run may read.

SIR F. H. DOYLE

23. LOSS OF THE BIRKENHEAD

Right on our flank the crimson sun went down;
The deep sea roll'd around in dark repose;
When, like the wild shriek from some captured town,
A cry of women rose.

The stout ship *Birkenhead* lay hard and fast,
Caught without hope upon a hidden rock;
Her timbers thrill'd as nerves, when through them pass'd
The spirit of that shock.

And ever like base cowards, who leave their ranks
In danger's hour, before the rush of steel,
Drifted away disorderly the planks
From underneath her keel.

So calm the air, so calm and still the flood,
That low down in its blue translucent glass
We saw the great fierce fish, that thirst for blood,
Pass slowly, then repass.

They tarried, the waves tarried, for their prey!
The sea turn'd one clear smile! Like things asleep
Those dark shapes in the azure silence lay,
As quiet as the deep.

Then amidst oath, and prayer, and rush, and wreck,
Faint screams, faint questions waiting no reply,
Our Colonel gave the word, and on the deck
Form'd us in line to die.

To die!—'twas hard, whilst the sleek ocean glow'd
 Beneath a sky as fair as summer flowers:—
All to the boats! cried one:—he was, thank God,
 No officer of ours!

Our English hearts beat true:—we would not stir:
 That base appeal we heard, but heeded not:
 On land, on sea, we had our Colours, sir,
 To keep without a spot!

They shall not say in England, that we fought
 With shameful strength, unhonour'd life to seek;
 Into mean safety, mean deserters, brought
 By trampling down the weak.

So we made women with their children go,
 The oars ply back again, and yet again;
 Whilst, inch by inch, the drowning ship sank low,
 Still under steadfast men.

—What follows, why recall?—The brave who died,
 Died without flinching in the bloody surf;
 They sleep as well beneath that purple tide,
 As others under turf.

SIR F. H. DOYLE

24. THE THREE FISHERS

Three fishers went sailing away to the West,
 Away to the West as the sun went down;
 Each thought on the woman who loved him the best,
 And the children stood watching them out of the town;
 For men must work, and women must weep,
 And there's little to earn, and many to keep,
 Though the harbour bar be moaning.

Three wives sat up in the lighthouse tower,
And they trimmed the lamps as the sun went down;
They looked at the squall, and they looked at the shower,
And the night-rack came rolling up ragged and brown.
But men must work, and women must weep,
Though storms be sudden, and waters deep,
And the harbour bar be moaning.

Three corpses lay out on the shining sands,
In the morning gleam, as the tide went down,
And the women are weeping and wringing their hands
For those who will never come home to the town.
For men must work, and women must weep,
And the sooner it's over, the sooner to sleep,
And good-bye to the bar and its moaning.

C. KINGSLEY

25. LUCY GRAY

Oft I had heard of Lucy Gray :
And when I cross'd the wild,
I chanced to see at break of day
The solitary child.

No mate, no comrade Lucy knew:
She dwelt on a wide moor,
—The sweetest thing that ever grew
Beside a human door!

You yet may spy the fawn at play,
The hare upon the green ;
But the sweet face of Lucy Gray
Will never more be seen.

'To-night will be a stormy night—
You to the town must go ;
And take a lantern, Child, to light
Your mother through the snow.'

'That, Father! will I gladly do:
'Tis scarcely afternoon—
The minster-clock has just struck two,
And yonder is the moon!'

At this the father raised his hook,
And snapp'd a faggot-band;
He plied his work;—and Lucy took
The lantern in her hand.

Not blither is the mountain roe:
With many a wanton stroke
Her feet disperse the powdery snow,
That rises up like smoke.

The storm came on before its time
She wander'd up and down;
And many a hill did Lucy climb
But never reach'd the town.

The wretched parents all that night
Went shouting far and wide;
But there was neither sound nor sight
To serve them for a guide.

At daybreak on a hill they stood
That overlook'd the moor;
And thence they saw the bridge of wood
A furlong from their door.

They wept—and, turning homeward cried
'In heaven we all shall meet!'
—When in the snow the mother spied
The print of Lucy's feet.

Then downwards from the steep hill's edge
They track'd the footmarks small;
And through the broken hawthorn hedge,
And by the long stone-wall:

And then an open field they cross'd :
The marks were still the same ;
They track'd them on, nor ever lost ;
And to the bridge they came :

They follow'd from the snowy bank
Those footmarks, one by one,
Into the middle of the plank ;
And further there were none !

— Yet some maintain that to this day
She is a living child ;
That you may see sweet Lucy Gray
Upon the lonesome wild.

O'er rough and smooth she trips along,
And never looks behind ;
And sings a solitary song
That whistles in the wind.

W. WORDSWORTH

26. THE WRECK OF THE HESPERUS

It was the schooner Hesperus,
That sailed the wintry sea ;
And the skipper had taken his little daughter,
To bear him company.

Blue were her eyes as the fairy-flax,
Her cheeks like the dawn of day,
And her bosom white as the hawthorn buds
That ope in the month of May.

The skipper he stood beside the helm,
His pipe was in his mouth,
And he watched how the veering flaw did blow
The smoke now West, now South.

Then up and spake an old sailor,
Had sailed the Spanish Main :
'I pray thee, put into yonder port,
For I fear a hurricane.

'Last night the moon had a golden ring,
And to-night no moon we see !'
The skipper he blew a whiff from his pipe,
And a scornful laugh laughed he.

Colder and louder blew the wind,
A gale from the North-east ;
The snow fell hissing in the brine,
And the billows frothed like yeast.

Down came the storm, and smote amain
The vessel in its strength ;
She shuddered and paused, like a frightened steed,
Then leaped her cable's length.

'Come hither ! come hither ! my little daughter,
And do not tremble so ;
For I can weather the roughest gale
That ever wind did blow.'

He wrapped her warm in his seaman's coat
Against the stinging blast ;
He cut a rope from a broken spar,
And bound her to the mast.

'O father ! I hear the church-bells ring ;
O say, what may it be ?'
''Tis a fog-bell on a rock-bound coast !'
And he steered for the open sea.

'O father ! I hear the sound of guns ;
O say, what may it be ?'
'Some ship in distress, that cannot live
In such an angry sea !'

'O father! I see a gleaming light;
O say, what may it be?'
But the father answered never a word,
A frozen corpse was he.

Lashed to the helm, all stiff and stark,
With his face to the skies;
The lantern gleamed through the gleaming snow
On his fixed and glassy eyes.

Then the maiden clasped her hands and prayed
That saved she might be;
And she thought of Christ, who stilled the wave
On the Lake of Galilee.

And fast through the midnight dark and drear,
Through the whistling sleet and snow,
Like a sheeted ghost, the vessel swept
Towards the reef of Norman's Woe.

And ever the fitful gusts between
A sound came from the land;
It was the sound of the trampling surf
On the rocks and the hard sea-sand.

The breakers were right beneath her bows,
She drifted a dreary wreck,
And a whooping billow swept the crew
Like icicles from her deck.

She struck where the white and fleecy waves
Looked soft as carded wool,
But the cruel rocks they gored her side
Like the horns of an angry bull.

Her rattling shrouds, all sheathed in ice,
With the masts went by the board;
Like a vessel of glass, she stove and sank,—
Ho! ho! the breakers roared!

At daybreak on the bleak sea-beach
A fisherman stood aghast,
To see the form of a maiden fair
Lashed close to a drifting mast.

The salt sea was frozen on her breast,
The salt tears in her eyes;
And he saw her hair, like the brown sea-weed
On the billows fall and rise.

Such was the wreck of the Hesperus,
In the midnight and the snow!
Christ save us all from a death like this,
On the reef of Norman's Woe!

H. W. LONGFELLOW

27. LORD ULLIN'S DAUGHTER

A Chieftain to the Highlands bound
Cries, 'Boatman, do not tarry!
And I'll give thee a silver pound
To row us o'er the ferry!'

'Now who be ye, would cross Lochgyle,
This dark and stormy water?'
'O, I'm the chief of Ulva's isle,
And this, Lord Ullin's daughter.

'And fast before her father's men
Three days we have fled together,
For, should he find us in the glen,
My blood would stain the heather.

'His horsemen hard behind us ride —
Should they our steps discover,
Then who will cheer my bonny bride
When they have slain her lover?'

Outspoke the hardy Highland wight,
‘I’ll go, my chief, I’m ready :
It is not for your silver bright,
But for your winsome lady :—

‘And, by my word ! the bonny bird
In danger shall not tarry ;
So, though the waves are raging white,
I’ll row you o’er the ferry.’

By this the storm grew loud apace,
The water-wraith was shrieking ;
And in the scowl of heaven each face
Grew dark as they were speaking.

But still, as wilder blew the wind,
And as the night grew drearer,
Adown the glen rode arméd men
Their trampling sounded nearer.

‘O haste thee, haste !’ the lady cries,
‘Though tempests round us gather ;
I’ll meet the raging of the skies,
But not an angry father.’

The boat has left the stormy land,
A stormy sea before her,—
When, oh ! too strong for human hand,
The tempest gathered o’er her.

And still they row’d amidst the roar
Of waters fast prevailing :
Lord Ullin reach’d that fatal shore,—
His wrath was changed to wailing.

For, sore dismay’d, through storm and shade
His child he did discover :—
One lovely hand she stretch’d for aid,
And one was round her lover.

'Come back! come back!' he cried in grief
Across the stormy water:
'And I'll forgive your Highland chief,
My daughter!—Oh, my daughter!'

'Twas vain: the loud waves lash'd the shore,
Return or aid preventing:
The waters wild went o'er his child,
And he was left lamenting.

T. CAMPBELL

28. A LEGEND

It was upon a Lammas night
Two brothers woke and said,
As each upon the other's weal
Bethought him on his bed;

The elder spake unto his wife,
'Our brother dwells alone;
No little babes to cheer his life,
And helpmate hath he none;

'Up will I get and of my heap
A sheaf bestow or twain,
The while our Ahmed lies asleep,
And wots not of the gain.'

So up he got and did address
Himself with loving heed,
Before the dawning of the day,
To do that gracious deed.

Now to the younger, all unsought,
The same kind fancy came!
Nor wist they of each other's thought
Though movèd to the same.

‘Abdullah he hath wife,’ quoth he,
‘And little babes also;
What would be slender boot to me
Would make his heart o’erflow;

‘Up will I get, and of my heap
A sheaf bestow or twain,
The while he sweetly lies asleep,
And wots not of the gain.’

So up he got and did address
Himself with loving heed,
Before the dawning of the day
To make his brother’s deed!

Thus played they oft their gracious parts,
And marvelled oft to view
Their sheaves still equal; for their hearts
In love were equal too.

One morn they met, and, wondering, stood
To see by clear daylight
How each upon the other’s good
Bethought him in the night.

So when this tale to him was brought,
The Caliph did decree,
Where twain had thought the same good thought,
There Allah’s house should be.

C. TENNYSON-TURNER

29. THE HAND-POST

The night was dark, the sun was hid
Behind the mountain grey,
And not a single star appeared
To shoot a silver ray.

Across the heath the owlet flew
And screamed along the blast,
And onward, with a quickened step,
Benighted Henry past.

At intervals, amid the gloom,
A flash of lightning played,
And showed the ruts with water filled
And the black hedge's shade.

Again in thickest darkness plunged,
He groped his way to find,
And now he thought he spied beyond
A form of horrid kind.

In ghostly white it upward rose,
Of cloak or mantle bare,
And held its naked hands across
To catch him by the hair.

Poor Henry felt his blood run cold
At what before him stood,
Yet, like a man, did he resolve
To do the best he could.

So, calling all his courage up,
He to the goblin went,
And eager, through the dismal gloom,
His piercing eyes he bent.

But when he came well nigh the ghost
That gave him such a fright,
He clapped his hands upon his sides,
And loudly laughed outright.

For there a friendly post he found,
The stranger's road to mark;
A pleasant sprite was this to see,
For Henry in the dark.

'Well done!' said he, 'one lesson wise
I've learned beyond a doubt—
Whatever frightens me again,
I'll try to find it out.

And when I hear an idle tale
Of goblin or of ghost,
I'll tell of this my lonely walk,
And the tall, white hand-post.'

JANE TAYLOR

30. WE ARE SEVEN

— A simple child
That lightly draws its breath,
And feels its life in every limb,
What should it know of death?

I met a little cottage girl;
She was eight years old, she said,
Her hair was thick with many a curl
That clustered round her head.

She had a rustic, woodland air,
And she was wildly clad;
Her eyes were fair, and very fair;
Her beauty made me glad.

'Sisters and brothers, little maid,
How many may you be?'
'How many? Seven in all,' she said,
And wondering looked at me.

'And where are they? I pray you tell.'
She answered, 'Seven are we;
And two of us at Conway dwell,
And two are gone to sea.

'Two of us in the churchyard lie,
My sister and my brother;
And, in the churchyard cottage, I
Dwell near them with my mother.'

'You say that two at Conway dwell,
And two are gone to sea,
Yet ye are seven!—I pray you tell,
Sweet maid, how this may be.'

Then did the little maid reply,
'Seven boys and girls are we;
Two of us in the churchyard lie
Beneath the churchyard tree.'

'You run about, my little maid,
Your limbs they are alive;
If two are in the churchyard laid,
Then ye are only five.'

'Their graves are green, they may be seen,'
The little maid replied,
'Twelve steps or more from my mother's door,
And they are side by side.

'My stockings there I often knit,
My kerchief there I hem;
And there upon the ground I sit—
I sit and sing to them.

'And often after sunset, sir,
When it is light and fair,
I take my little porringer,
And eat my supper there.

'The first that died was little Jane;
In bed she moaning lay,
Till God released her of her pain;
And then she went away.

'So in the churchyard she was laid;
And, when the grass was dry,
Together round her grave we played,
My brother John and I.

'And when the ground was white with snow,
And I could run and slide,
My brother John was forced to go,
And he lies by her side.'

'How many are you, then,' said I,
'If they two are in Heaven?'
Quick was the little maid's reply,
'Oh, master! we are seven.'

'But they are dead; those two are dead!
Their spirits are in Heaven!'
'Twas throwing words away; for still
The little maid would have her will,
And said, 'Nay, we are seven!'

W. WORDSWORTH

31. AN ELEPHANT SAVES THE FLAG

Long, long ago, on India's plains,
There raged a battle fierce and strong;
The din of musketry was heard,
And cannon's roar was loud and long.
Old Hero marched with stately tread
His part to act in the affray;
And on his back above all heads
The royal ensign waved that day.

Fondly the soldiers viewed their flag,
Which shook its colours to the air,
Proudly the driver rode, and sent
His watchful gaze now here, now there,
Till 'Halt!' he cried; and Hero heard,
And instantly the word obeyed,
When, lo! a flash, a shriek, and then
His driver with the slain was laid.

Oh, fierce and hot the conflict grew:
Yet patiently old Hero stood
Amidst it all, the while his feet
Were stained, alas! with human blood.
His ears were strained, to catch the voice
Which only could his steps command,
Nor would he turn when men grew weak,
And panic spread on either hand.

But yet the standard waved aloft;
The fleeing soldiers saw it. 'Lo!
We are not conquered yet,' they cried,
And rallying closed upon the foe.
Then turned the tide of conquest, and
The royal ensign waved at last
Victorious o'er the blood-stained field,
Just as the weary day was past.

Yet waited Hero for the word
Of him whose sole command he knew—
Waited, nor moved one ponderous foot,
To his own captain's orders true.
Three lonely nights, three lonely days,
Poor Hero 'halted'. Bribe nor threat
Could stir him from the spot. And on
His back he bore the standard yet.

Then thought the soldiers of a child
Who lived one hundred miles away.
'The driver's son! fetch him!' they cried:
'His voice the creature will obey.'
He came, the little orphaned lad,
Scarce nine years old. But Hero knew
That many a time the master's son
Had been the 'little driver' too.

Obediently the brave old head
Was bowed before the child, and then,
With one long wistful glance around,
Old Hero's march began again.
Onward he went, the trappings hung
All stained and tattered at his side,
And no one saw the cruel wound
On which the blood was scarcely dried.

But when at last the tents were reached,
The suffering Hero raised his head,
And trumpeting his mortal pain,
Looked for the master who was dead;
And then about his master's son
His trunk old Hero feebly wound,
And ere another day had passed,
A soldier's honoured grave had found.

MARY D. BRINE

32. THE SPIDER AND THE FLY

'Will you walk into my parlour?' said the spider to the fly.
'Tis the prettiest little parlour that ever you did spy;
The way into my parlour is up a winding stair,
And I've many curious things to show when you are there.'
'Oh, no, no!' said the little fly, 'to ask me is in vain.
For who goes up your winding stair can ne'er come
down again!'

'I'm sure you must be weary, dear, with soaring up
so high;

Will you rest upon my little bed?' said the spider to
the fly.

'There are pretty curtains drawn around; the sheets are
fine and thin,

And if you like to rest awhile, I'll snugly tuck you in!'

'Oh, no, no!' said the little fly, 'for I've often heard
it said,

They never, never wake again who sleep upon your bed!'

Said the cunning spider to the fly: 'Dear friend, what
can I do

To prove the warm affection I've always felt for you?

I have within my pantry good store of all that's nice;

I'm sure you're very welcome—will you please to take
a slice?'

'Oh, no, no!' said the little fly, 'kind sir, that cannot be;

I've heard what's in your pantry, and I do not wish
to see!'

'Sweet creature!' said the spider, 'you're witty and
you're wise,

How handsome are your gauzy wings, how brilliant are
your eyes!

I've a little looking-glass upon my parlour shelf,

If you'll step in one moment, dear, you shall behold
yourself.'

'I thank you, gentle sir,' she said, 'for what you're
pleased to say,

And bidding you good-morning now, I'll call another day.'

The spider turned him round about, and went into his den,
For well he knew the silly fly would soon come back
again;

So he wove a subtle web, in a little corner sly,

And set his table ready, to dine upon the fly.

Then he came out to his door again, and merrily did sing;
'Come hither, hither, pretty fly, with the pearl and
silver wing;
Your robes are green and purple—there's a crest upon
your head;
Your eyes are like the diamond bright, but mine are dull
as lead!'

Alas, alas! how very soon this silly little fly,
Hearing his wily, flattering words, came slowly flitting by,
With buzzing wings she hung aloft, then near and nearer
drew,
Thinking only of her brilliant eyes, and green and purple
hue—
Thinking only of her crested head—poor, foolish thing!
At last
Up jumped the cunning spider, and fiercely held her fast,
He dragged her up his winding stair, into his dismal den,
Within his little parlour—but she ne'er came out again!

MARY HOWITT

33. THE ANT AND THE CRICKET

A silly young cricket, accustomed to sing
Through the warm, sunny months of gay summer and
spring,
Began to complain, when he found that at home
His cupboard was empty and winter was come.
Not a crumb to be found
On the snow-covered ground;
Not a flower could he see,
Not a leaf on a tree:
'Oh, what will become,' says the cricket, 'of me?'

At last by starvation and famine made bold,
All dripping with wet and all trembling with cold,
Away he set off to a miserly ant,
To see if, to keep him alive, he would grant
 Him shelter from rain :
 A mouthful of grain
 He wished only to borrow,
 He'd repay it to-morrow :
If not, he must die of starvation and sorrow.

Says the ant to the cricket, 'I'm your servant and friend,
But we ants never borrow, we ants never lend ;
But tell me, dear sir, did you lay nothing by
When the weather was warm?' Said the cricket, 'Not I.
 My heart was so light,
 That I sang day and night,
 For all nature looked gay.'
 'You sang, sir, you say ?
Go then,' said the ant, 'and *dance* winter away.'

Thus ending, he hastily lifted the wicket
And out of the door turned the poor little cricket.
Though this is a fable the moral is good :
If you live without work, you must live without food.

√34. THE GLOVE AND THE LIONS

King Francis was a hearty king, and loved a royal sport ;
And one day, as his lions strove, sat looking on the
 court :
The nobles filled the benches round, the ladies by their
 side,
And 'mongst them Count de Lorge, with one he hoped
 to make his bride.

And truly 'twas a gallant thing, to see the crowning
show,
Valour and love, and a king above, and the royal beasts
below.

Ramped and roared the lions, with horrid laughing jaws;
They bit, they glared, gave blows like beams, a wind
went with their paws;
With wallowing might and stifled roar they rolled one
on another,
Till all the pit, with sand and mane, was in a thund'rous
smother;
The bloody foam above the bars came whizzing through
the air;
Said Francis then, 'Good gentlemen, we're better here
than there!'

De Lorge's love o'erheard the king, a beauteous lively
dame,
With smiling lips, and sharp bright eyes, which always
seemed the same:
She thought, 'The Count, my lover, is as brave as brave
can be:
He surely would do desperate things to show his love
of me!
King, ladies, lovers, all look on; the chance is wondrous
fine;
I'll drop my glove to prove his love: great glory will be
mine!'

She dropped her glove to prove his love: then looked on
him and smiled;
He bowed, and in a moment leaped among the lions
wild!

The leap was quick ; return was quick : he soon regained
his place —

Then threw the glove, but not with love, right in the
lady's face !

'Well done!' cried Francis, 'bravely done!' and he rose
from where he sat :

'No love,' quoth he, 'but vanity, sets love a task like
that !'

LEIGH HUNT

35. REPORT OF AN ADJUDGED CASE

Between Nose and Eyes a strange contest arose,—

The spectacles set them unhappily wrong ;

The point in dispute was, as all the world knows,

To which the said spectacles ought to belong.

So Tongue was the lawyer, and argued the cause

With a great deal of skill, and a wig full of learning ;

While Chief Baron Ear sat to balance the laws,

So famed for his talent in nicely discerning.

'In behalf of the Nose it will quickly appear,

And your lordship,' he said, 'will undoubtedly find,

That the Nose has had spectacles always in wear,

Which amounts to possession time out of mind.'

Then holding the spectacles up to the court,—

'Your lordship observes they are made with a straddle

As wide as the ridge of the Nose is ; in short,

Designed to sit close to it, just like a saddle.

'Again, would your lordship a moment suppose

('Tis a case that has happened, and may be again)

That the visage or countenance had not a Nose,

Pray who would, or who could, wear spectacles then ?

'On the whole it appears, and my argument shows,
With a reasoning the court will never condemn,
That the spectacles plainly were made for the Nose,
And the Nose was as plainly intended for them.'

Then shifting his side, as a lawyer knows how,
He pleaded again in behalf of the Eyes:
But what were his arguments few people know,
For the court did not think they were equally wise.

So his lordship decreed with a grave solemn tone,
Decisive and clear, without one *if* or *but*—
That, whenever the Nose put his spectacles on,
By daylight or candlelight—Eyes should be shut!

W. COWPER

36. BETH GELERT

The spearmen heard the bugle sound,
And cheerly smiled the morn;
And many a brach and many a hound
Obeyed Llewelyn's horn.

And still he blew a louder blast,
And gave a lustier cheer:
'Come, Gelert, come, wert never last
Llewelyn's horn to hear.

'Oh, where does faithful Gelert roam,
The flower of all his race;
So true, so brave—a lamb at home,
A lion in the chase?'

'Twas only at Llewelyn's board
The faithful Gelert fed;
He watched, he served, he cheered his lord,
And sentinelled his bed.

In sooth he was a peerless hound,
The gift of royal John;
But now no Gelert could be found,
And all the chase rode on.

And now, as o'er the rocks and dells
The gallant chidings rise,
All Snowdon's craggy chaos yells
The many-mingled cries!

That day Llewelyn little loved
The chase of hart and hare;
And scant and small the booty proved,
For Gelert was not there.

Unpleased, Llewelyn homeward hied,
When, near the portal seat,
His truant Gelert he espied,
Bounding his lord to greet.

But when he gained the castle door,
Aghast the chieftain stood:
The hound all o'er was smeared with gore
His lips and fangs ran blood.

Llewelyn gazed with fierce surprise;
Unused such looks to meet,
His favourite checked his joyful guise,
And crouched, and licked his feet.

Onward, in haste, Llewelyn passed,
And on went Gelert too;
And still, where'er his eyes were cast,
Fresh blood-gouts shocked his view.

O'erturned his infant's bed he found,
With blood-stained covert rent;
And all around, the walls and ground
With recent blood besprent.

He called his child—no voice replied—
He searched with terror wild;
Blood! blood he found on every side,
But nowhere found his child.

‘Hell-hound! my child’s by thee devoured,’
The frantic father cried;
And to the hilt his vengeful sword
He plunged in Gelert’s side.

His suppliant looks, as prone he fell,
No pity could impart;
But still his Gelert’s dying yell
Passed heavy o’er his heart.

Aroused by Gelert’s dying yell,
Some slumberer wakened nigh:
What words the parent’s joy can tell
To hear his infant cry!

Concealed beneath a tumbled heap
His hurried search had missed,
All glowing from his rosy sleep,
The cherub boy he kissed.

Nor scathe had he, nor harm, nor dread,
But the same couch beneath,
Lay a gaunt wolf, all torn and dead,
Tremendous still in death.

Ah, what was then Llewelyn’s pain!
For now the truth was clear;
The gallant hound the wolf had slain
To save Llewelyn’s heir.

Vain, vain was all Llewelyn’s woe;
‘Best of thy kind, adieu!
The frantic blow which laid thee low
This heart shall ever rue.’

And now a gallant tomb they raise,
With costly sculpture decked ;
And marbles storied with his praise
Poor Gelert's bones protect.

There, never could the spearman pass,
Or forester unmoved ;
There, oft the tear-besprinkled grass
Llewelyn's sorrow proved.

And there he hung his horn and spear,
And there, as evening fell,
In fancy's ear he oft would hear
Poor Gelert's dying yell.

And, till great Snowdon's rocks grow old,
And cease the storm to brave,
The consecrated spot shall hold
The name of Gelert's Grave.

W. R. SPENCER

37. BISHOP HATTO

The summer and autumn had been so wet,
That in winter the corn was growing yet,
'Twas a piteous sight to see all around
The grain lie rotting on the ground.

Every day the starving poor
Crowded around Bishop Hatto's door,
For he had a plentiful last-year's store,
And all the neighbourhood could tell
His granaries were furnish'd well.

At last Bishop Hatto appointed a day
To quiet the poor without delay ;
He bade them to his great barn repair,
And they should have food for the winter there.

Rejoiced such tidings good to hear,
The poor folk flock'd from far and near;
The great barn was full as it could hold
Of women and children, and young and old.

Then when he saw it could hold no more,
Bishop Hatto he made fast the door;
And while for mercy on Christ they call,
He set fire to the barn and burnt them all.

'I' faith 'tis an excellent bonfire!' quoth he,
'And the country is greatly obliged to me,
For ridding it in these times forlorn
Of rats that only consume the corn.'

So then to his palace returnèd he,
And he sat down to supper merrily,
And he slept that night like an innocent man;
But Bishop Hatto never slept again.

In the morning as he entered the hall
Where his picture hung against the wall,
A sweat like death all over him came,
For the rats had eaten it out of the frame.

As he look'd there came a man from his farm —
He had a countenance white with alarm;
'My Lord, I open'd your granaries this morn,
And the rats had eaten all your corn.'

Another came running presently,
And he was pale as pale could be,
'Fly! my Lord Bishop, fly,' quoth he,
'Ten thousand rats are coming this way,...
The Lord forgive you for yesterday!'

'I'll go to my tower on the Rhine,' replied he,
'Tis the safest place in Germany;
The walls are high and the shores are steep,
And the stream is strong and the water deep.'

Bishop Hatto fearfully hasten'd away,
And he cross'd the Rhine without delay,
And reach'd his tower, and barr'd with care
All the windows, doors, and loopholes there.

He laid him down and closed his eyes,
But soon a scream made him arise;
He started, and saw two eyes of flame
On his pillow from whence the screaming came.

He listen'd and look'd...it was only the cat;
But the Bishop he grew more fearful for that,
For she sat screaming, mad with fear,
At the army of rats that was drawing near.

For they have swum over the river so deep,
And they have climb'd the shores so steep,
And up the tower their way is bent,
To do the work for which they were sent.

They are not to be told by the dozen or score,
By thousands they come, and by myriads and more;
Such numbers had never been heard of before,
Such a judgment had never been witness'd of yore.

Down on his knees the Bishop fell,
And faster and faster his beads did he tell,
As louder and louder drawing near
The gnawing of their teeth he could hear.

And in at the windows, and in at the door,
And through the walls helter-skelter they pour,
And down from the ceiling, and up through the floor,
From the right and the left, from behind and before,
From within and without, from above and below,
And all at once to the Bishop they go.

They have whetted their teeth against the stones,
And now they pick the Bishop's bones ;
They gnaw'd the flesh from every limb,
For they were sent to do judgment on him !

R. SOUTHEY

✓ 38. THE SPILT PEARLS

His courtiers from the caliph crave :
‘O, say how this may be,
That of thy slaves, this Ethiop slave
Is best beloved by thee ?

‘For he is ugly as the night ;
And when has ever chose
A nightingale for its delight
A hueless, scentless rose ?’

The caliph then : ‘No features fair,
Nor comely mien is his ;
Love is the beauty he doth wear,
And love his glory is.

‘When once a camel of my train
Fell in a narrow street,
From broken casket rolled amain
Rich pearls before my feet.

‘I, nodding to the slaves, that I
Would freely give them these,
At once upon the spoil they fly,
The costly boon to seize.

'One only at my side remained —
Beside this Ethiop none;
He, moveless as the steed he reined,
Behind me sat alone.

'“What will thy gain, good fellow, be
Thus lingering at my side?”’
'My king, that I shall faithfully
Have guarded thee!’ he cried.

'True servant's title he may wear,
He only who has not—
For his lord's gifts, how rich soe'er—
His lord himself forgot.'

ARCHBISHOP TRENCH

39. THE FISHERMAN AND THE PORTER

There was a famous nobleman
Who flourished in the East,
And once, upon a holiday,
He made a goodly feast,
And summoned in of kith and kin
A hundred at the least.

Now while they sat in social chat,
Discoursing frank and free,
In came the steward, with a bow—
'A man below,' said he,
'Has got, my lord, the finest fish
That ever swam the sea!'

'Indeed!' exclaimed the nobleman,
'Then buy it in a trice;
The finest fish that ever swam
Must needs be very nice;
Go, buy it of the fisherman,
And never mind the price.'

‘And so I would,’ the steward said,
‘But, faith, he wouldn’t hear
A word of money for his fish,—
Was ever man so queer?
But said he thought a hundred stripes
Could not be counted dear!’

‘Go, bring him here,’ my lord replied;
‘The man I fain would see:
A merry wag, by your report,
That fisherman must be!’
‘Go, bring him here! Go, bring him here!’
Cried all the company.

The steward did as he was bid,
When thus my lord began:
‘For this fine fish what may you wish?
I’ll buy it if I can.’
‘One hundred lashes on my back!’
Exclaimed the fisherman.

‘Now, by the rood! but this is good,’
The laughing lord replied;
‘Well, let the fellow have his way;
Go, call a groom!’ he cried;
‘But let the payment he demands
Be modestly applied.’

He bared his back and took the lash
As it were merry play;
But at the fiftieth stroke he said,
‘Good master groom, I pray
Desist a moment, if you please;
I have a word to say.

'I have a partner in the case,
The fellow standing there;
Pray take the jacket off his back,
And let him have his share;
That one of us should take the whole
Were surely hardly fair!'

'A partner?' cried the nobleman,
'What can the fellow mean?'
'I mean,' replied the fisherman,
With countenance serene,
'Your porter there! the biggest knave
That ever yet was seen!'

'The rogue who stopped me at the gate,
And wouldn't let me in
Until I swore to give him half
Of all my fish should win.
I've got my share! Pray let, my lord,
His payment now begin!'

'What you propose,' my lord replied,
'Is nothing more than fair;
Here, groom, lay on a hundred stripes,
And mind you do not spare;
The scurvy dog shall never say
He didn't get his share!'

Then all that goodly company,
They laughed with might and main,
The while beneath the stinging lash
The porter writhed in pain.
'So fare all villains,' quoth my lord,
'Who seek dishonest gain!'

Then turning to the fisherman,
Who still was standing near,
He filled his hand with golden coins,
Some twenty sequins clear,
And bade him come and take the like
On each succeeding year.

J. G. SAXE

40. THE KING AND THE COTTAGER

Pray list unto a legend
The ancient poets tell;
'Tis of a mighty monarch
In Persia once did dwell;
A mighty queer old monarch,
Who ruled his kingdom well.

'I must build another palace,'
Observed the mighty King;
'For this is getting shabby
Along the southern wing;
And, really, for a monarch,
It isn't quite the thing.

'So I will have a new one,
Although I greatly fear
To build it just to suit me
Will cost me rather dear:
And I'll choose, God wot, another spot,
Much finer than this here.'

So he travelled o'er the kingdom
A proper site to find,
Where he might build a palace
Exactly to his mind,
All with a pleasant prospect
Before it, and behind.

Not long with this endeavour
The King had travelled round,
Ere, to his royal pleasure,
A charming spot he found;
But an ancient widow's cabin
Was standing on the ground.

'Ah, here,' exclaimed the monarch,
'Is just the proper spot,
If this woman would allow me
To remove her little cot!'
But the beldam answered plainly,
She had rather he did not!

'Within this lowly cottage,
Great Monarch, I was born;
And only from this cottage
By Death will I be torn:
So spare it, in your justice,
Or spoil it in your scorn!'

Then all the courtiers mocked her,
With cruel words and jeers:—
''Tis plain her royal master
She neither loves nor fears;
We would knock her ugly hovel
About her ugly ears!

'When ever was a subject
Who might the King withstand?
Or deem his spoken pleasure
As less than his command?
Of course he'll rout the beldam,
And confiscate her land!'

But to their deep amazement,
His Majesty replied :
'Good woman, never heed them,
The King is on your side :
Your cottage is your castle,
And here you shall abide.

'And I will build beside it,
For though your cot may be
In such a lordly presence,
No fitting thing to see,
If it honour not my castle,
It will surely honour me !'

Now from his spoken purpose
The King departed not ;
He built the royal dwelling
Upon the chosen spot,
And there they stood together,
The palace and the cot !

Long, long he ruled his kingdom
In honour and renown ;
But danger ever threatens
The head that wears a crown,
And Fortune tired of smiling,
For once put on a frown.

And so two wicked courtiers,
Who long had strove in vain
By craft and evil counsels
To mar the monarch's reign,
Contrived a scheme infernal,
Whereby he should be slain !

To plan their wicked treason,
They sought a lonely spot
Behind the royal palace,
Hard by the widow's cot,
Who heard their machinations,
And straight revealed the plot!

'I see,' exclaimed the Persian,
'The just are wise alone;
Who spares the rights of others
May chance to guard his own;
The widow's humble cottage
Has propped a monarch's throne!'

J. G. SAXE

41. MAHMOUD

There came a man, making his hasty moan
Before the Sultan Mahmoud on his throne
And crying out, 'My sorrow is my right;
And I *will* see the Sultan, and to-night.'

'Sorrow,' said Mahmoud, 'is a reverend thing:
I recognize its right, as king with king.
Speak on.' 'A fiend has got into my house,'
Exclaimed the staring man, 'and tortures us:
One of thine officers; he comes, the abhorred,
And takes possession of my house, my board.'

'Is he there now?' said Mahmoud. 'No, he left
The house when I did, of my wits bereft;
And laughed me down the street, because I vowed
I'd bring the prince himself to lay him in his shroud.
I'm mad with want—I'm mad with misery;
And oh, thou Sultan Mahmoud, God cries out with thee!'

The Sultan comforted the man, and said,
'Go home, and I will send thee wine and bread'
(For he was poor), 'and other comforts. Go;
And should the wretch return, let Sultan Mahmoud know.'

In three days' time, with haggard eyes and beard,
And shaken voice, the suitor reappeared,
And said, 'He's come.' Mahmoud said not a word,
But rose and took four slaves, each with a sword,
And went with the vexed man. They reach the place,
And hear a voice, and see a woman's face,
That to the window fluttered in affright.
'Go in,' said Mahmoud, 'and put out the light;
But tell the females first to leave the room:
And when the drunkard follows them, we come.'

The man went in. There was a cry; and hark!
A table falls; the window is struck dark;
Forth rush the breathless women; and behind,
With curses, comes the fiend in desperate mind.
In vain: the sabres soon cut short the strife,
And chop the shrieking wretch, and drink his bloody life.

'Now *light* the light!' the Sultan cried aloud.
'Twas done: he took it in his hand, and bowed
Over the corpse, and looked upon the face;
Then turned, and knelt, and to the throne of grace
Put up a prayer, and from his lips there crept
Some gentle words of pleasure, and he wept.

In reverent silence the beholders wait,
Then bring him, at his call, both wine and meat;
And when he had refresh'd his noble heart,
He bade his host be blest, and rose up to depart.

The man amaz'd, all mildness now and tears,
Fell at the Sultan's feet with many prayers,
And begg'd him to vouchsafe to tell his slave,
The reason first of that command he gave
About the light; then when he saw the face,
Why he knelt down; and lastly how it was
That fare so poor as his detain'd him in the place.

The Sultan said, with much humanity,
'Since first I heard thee come, and heard thy cry,
I could not rid me of a dread that one
By whom such daring villanies were done,
Must be some lord of mine, perhaps a lawless son.

Whoe'er he was, I knew my task, but fear'd
A father's heart, in case the worst appear'd.
For this I had the light put out. But when
I saw the face and found a stranger slain,
I knelt and thank'd the sovereign arbiter,
Whose work I had perform'd through pain and fear.
And then I rose and was refresh'd with food,
The first time since thou cam'st and marr'd'st my solitude.'

LEIGH HUNT

42. YUSSOUF

A stranger came one night to Yussouf's tent,
Saying, 'Behold one outcast and in dread,
Against whose life the bow of power is bent,
Who flies, and hath not where to lay his head;
I come to thee for shelter and for food,
To Yussouf, called through all our tribes "The Good."'

'This tent is mine,' said Yussouf, 'but no more
Than it is God's; come in, and be at peace;
Freely shalt thou partake of all my store,
As I of His who buildeth over these
Our tents His glorious roof of night and day,
And at whose door none ever yet heard "Nay."'

So Yussouf entertained his guest that night,
And, waking him ere day, said, 'Here is gold;
My swiftest horse is saddled for thy flight;
Depart before the prying day grows bold.'
As one lamp lights another, nor grows less,
So nobleness enkindleth nobleness.

That inward light the stranger's face made grand,
Which shines from all self-conquest. Kneeling low,
He bowed his forehead upon Yussouf's hand,
Sobbing, 'O Sheik, I cannot leave thee so;
I will repay thee; all this thou hast done
Unto that Ibrahim who slew thy son!'

'Take thrice the gold,' said Yussouf; 'for with thee
Into the desert, never to return,
My one black thought shall ride away from me.
First-born, for whom by day and night I yearn,
Balanced and just are all of God's decrees;
Thou art avenged, my first-born, sleep in peace!'

J. R. LOWELL

✓43. HARMOSAN

Now the third and fatal conflict for the Persian throne
is done,
And the Moslem's fiery valour has the crowning victory
won.

Harmosan, the last and boldest the invader to defy,
Captive, overborne by numbers, they are bringing forth
to die.

Then exclaimed that noble captive: 'Lo, I perish in my
thirst!
Give me but one drink of water, and let then arrive the
worst!'

In his hand he took the goblet; but awhile the draught
forbore,
Seeming doubtfully the purpose of the foemen to explore.

Well might then have paused the bravest, for around
him angry foes
With a hedge of naked weapons did that lonely man enclose.

'But what fear'st thou?' cried the Caliph; 'is it, friend, a
secret blow?
Fear it not! our gallant Moslem no such treacherous
dealing know.

'Thou may'st quench thy thirst securely, for thou shalt
not die before
Thou hast drunk that cup of water. This reprieve is
thine—no more!'

Quick the Satrap dashed the goblet down to earth with
ready hand,
And the liquid sank for ever, lost amid the burning sand.

'Thou hast said that mine my life is till the water of
that cup
I have drained; then bid thy servants that spilled water
gather up.'

For a moment stood the Caliph as by doubtful passions
stirred,
Then exclaimed, 'For ever sacred must remain a monarch's
word!

'Bring another cup, and straightway to the noble Persian
give.
'Drink, I said before, and perish; now I bid thee drink
and live!'

44. JAFFAR

Jaffâr, the Barmecide, the good Vizier,
The poor man's hope, the friend without a peer,
Jaffâr was dead, slain by a doom unjust;
And guilty Hâroun, sullen with mistrust
Of what the good and e'en the bad might say,
Ordained that no man living from that day
Should dare to speak his name on pain of death.—
All Araby and Persia held their breath.

All but the brave Mondeer.—He, proud to show
How far for love a grateful soul could go,
And facing death for very scorn and grief,
(For his great heart wanted a great relief),
Stood forth in Bagdad, daily in the square
Where once had stood a happy house, and there
Harangued the tremblers at the scymitar
On all they owed to the divine Jaffâr.

'Bring me this man,' the caliph cried. The man
Was brought—was gazed upon. The mutes began
To bind his arms. 'Welcome, brave cords,' cried he;
'From bonds far worse Jaffâr delivered me;
From wants, from shames, from loveless household fears;
Made a man's eyes friends with delicious tears;
Restored me, loved me, put me on a par
With his great self. How can I pay Jaffâr?'

Hâroun, who felt that on a soul like this
The mightiest vengeance could but fall amiss,
Now deigned to smile, as one great lord of fate
Might smile, upon another half as great.
He said, 'Let worth grow frenzied, if it will;
The caliph's judgment shall be master still.
Go: and since gifts so move thee, take this gem,
The richest in the Tartar's diadem,
And hold the giver as thou deemest fit.'

'Gifts' cried the friend. He took; and holding it
High towards the heavens, as though to meet his star,
Exclaimed, 'This too I owe to thee, Jaffâr'.

LEIGH HUNT

45. THE PLATE OF GOLD

One day there fell in great Benares' temple-court
A wondrous plate of gold, whereon these words were writ:
'To him who loveth best, a gift from Heaven.'

Thereat

The priests made proclamation: 'At the midday hour,
Each day, let those assemble who for virtue deem
Their right to heaven's gift the best; and we will hear
The deeds of mercy done, and so adjudge.'

The news

Ran swift as light, and soon from every quarter came
Nobles and munshis, hermits, scholars, holy men,
And all renowned for gracious or for splendid deeds.
Meanwhile the priests in solemn council sat and heard
What each had done to merit best the gift of Heaven.
So for a year the claimants came and went.

At last,

After a patient weighing of the worth of all,
The priests bestowed the plate of gold on one who seemed
The largest lover of the race—whose whole estate,
Within the year, had parted been among the poor.
This man, all trembling with his joy, advanced to take
The golden plate—when lo; at his first finger touch
It changed to basest lead! All stood aghast; but when
The hapless claimant dropt it clanging on the floor,
Heaven's guerdon was again transformed to shining gold.

So for another twelvemonth sat the priests and judged.
Thrice they awarded—thrice did Heaven refuse the gift.

Meanwhile a host of poor, maiméd beggars in the street
Lay all about the temple gate, in hope to move
That love whereby each claimant hoped to win the gift.
And well for them it was (if gold be charity),
For every pilgrim to the temple gate praised God
That love might thus approve itself before the test.
And so the coins rained freely in the outstretched hands;
But none of those who gave, so much as turned to look
Into the poor sad eyes of them that begged.

And now

The second year had almost passed, but still the plate
Of gold, by whomsoever touched, was turned to lead.
At length there came a simple peasant—not aware
Of that strange contest for the gift of God—to pay
A vow within the temple. As he passed along
The line of shrivelled beggars, all his soul was moved
Within him to sweet pity, and the tears welled up
And trembled in his eyes.

Now by the temple gate

There lay a poor, sore creature, blind, and shunned by all;
But when the peasant came, and saw the sightless face
And trembling, maiméd hands, he could not pass, but knelt,
And took both palms in his, and softly said; ‘O thou,
My brother! bear thy trouble bravely. God is good.’
Then he arose and walked straightway across the court,
And entered where they wrangled of their deeds of love
Before the priests.

A while he listened sadly; then

Had turned away; but something moved the priest who held
The plate of gold to beckon to the peasant. So
He came, not understanding, and obeyed, and stretched
His hand and took the sacred vessel. Lo! it shone
With thrice its former lustre, and amazed them all!
‘Son,’ cried the priest, ‘rejoice. The gift of God is thine.
Thou lovest best!’ And all made answer, ‘It is well,’

And, one by one, departed. But the peasant knelt
And prayed, bowing his head above the golden plate;
While o'er his soul like morning streamed the love of God.

LEIGH HUNT

46. THE SANDS OF DEE

'O Mary, go and call the cattle home,
And call the cattle home,
And call the cattle home,
Across the sands of Dee!'

The western wind was wild and dank with foam,
And all alone went she.

The western tide crept up along the sand,
And o'er and o'er the sand,
And round and round the sand,
As far as eye could see;
The rolling mist came down and hid the land,
And never home came she.

Oh! is it weed, or fish, or floating hair—
A tress of golden hair,
Of drownèd maiden's hair,
Above the nets at sea?
Was never salmon yet that shone so fair
Among the stakes of Dee!

They rowed her in across the rolling foam,
The cruel, crawling foam,
The cruel, hungry foam,
To her grave beside the sea:
But still the boatmen hear her call the cattle home
Across the sands of Dee.

C. KINGSLEY

47. THE VISION OF BELSHAZZAR

The king was on his throne, the Satraps thronged the hall,
A thousand bright lamps shone o'er that high festival.

A thousand cups of gold, in Judah deemed divine—
Jehovah's vessels,—hold the godless Heathen's wine!

In that same hour and hall, the fingers of a hand
Came forth against the wall, and wrote as if on sand:

The fingers of a man;—a solitary hand
Along the letters ran; and traced them like a wand,

The monarch saw, and shook, and bade no more rejoice;
All bloodless waxed his look, and tremulous his voice.

'Let the men of lore appear, the wisest of the earth;
And expound the words of fear, which mar our royal mirth.'

Chaldæ's seers are good, but here they have no skill;
And the unknown letters stood untold and awful still.

And Babel's men of age are wise and deep in lore;
But now they were not sage, they saw,—but knew no more.

A Captive in the land, a stranger and a youth,
He heard the King's command, he saw that writing's truth.

The lamps around were bright, the prophecy in view;
He read it on that night,—the morrow proved it true,

'Belshazzar's grave is made—his Kingdom passed away—
He, in the balance weighed, is light and worthless clay.

The shroud, his robe of state—his canopy, the stone;
The Mede is at his gate—the Persian on his throne!—

LORD BYRON

48. HOME THEY BROUGHT HER WARRIOR DEAD

Home they brought her warrior dead :
She nor swoon'd nor utter'd cry :
All her maidens, watching, said,
‘She must weep or she will die.’

Then they praised him soft and low,
Call'd him worthy to be loved,
Truest friend and noblest foe ;
Yet she neither spoke nor moved.

Stole a maiden from her place,
Lightly to the warrior stopt,
Took the face-cloth from the face ;
Yet she neither moved nor wept,

Rose a nurse of ninety years,
Set his child upon her knee—
Like summer tempest came her tears—
‘Sweet, my child, I live for thee.’

A. TENNYSON

49. THE WELL OF ST. KEYNE

A well there is in the west country,
And a clearer one never was seen ;
There is not a wife in the west country
But has heard of the Well of St. Keyne.

An oak and an elm-tree stand beside,
And behind doth an ash-tree grow
And a willow from the bank above
Droops to the water below.

A traveller came to the Well of St. Keyne;
Joyfully he drew nigh,
For from cock-crow he had been travelling,
And there was not a cloud in the sky.

He drank of the water so cool and clear,
For thirsty and hot was he,
And he sat down upon the bank
Under the willow-tree.

There came a man from the house hard by
At the Well to fill his pail;
On the Well-side he rested it,
And he bade the Stranger hail.

'Now art thou a bachelor, Stranger?' quoth he,
'For an if thou hast a wife,
The happiest draught thou hast drunk this day
That ever thou didst in thy life.

'Or has thy good woman, if one thou hast,
Ever here in Cornwall been?
For an if she have, I'll venture my life
She has drunk of the Well of St. Keyne.'

'I have left a good woman who never was here,'
The Stranger he made reply,
'But that my draught should be the better for that,
I pray you answer me why?'

'St. Keyne,' quoth the Cornish-man, 'many a time
Drank of this crystal Well,
And before the Angel summon'd her,
She laid on the water a spell.

'If the Husband of this gifted Well
Shall drink before his Wife,
A happy man thenceforth is he,
For he shall be Master for life,

'But if the Wife should drink of it first,...
 God help the husband then !'
 The Stranger stoopt to the Well of St. Keyne,
 And drank of the water again.

'You drank of the Well I warrant betimes !'
 He to the Cornish-man said :
 But the Cornish-man smiled as the Stranger spake,
 And sheepishly shook his head.

'I hasten'd as soon as the wedding was done,
 And left my wife in the porch ;
 But i' faith she had been wiser than me,
 For she took a bottle to Church.'

R. SOUTHEY

50. BALLAD OF EARL HALDAN'S DAUGHTER

It was Earl Haldan's daughter,
 She looked across the sea ;
 She looked across the water,
 And long and loud laughed she :
 'The locks of six princesses
 Must be my marriage fee,
 So hey bonny boat, and ho bonny boat !
 Who comes a-wooing me !'

It was Earl Haldan's daughter,
 She walked along the sand ;
 When she was aware of a knight so fair,
 Came sailing to the land.
 His sails were all of velvet,
 His mast of beaten gold,
 And hey bonny boat, and ho bonny boat !
 Who saileth here so bold !

'The locks of five princesses
I won beyond the sea;
I clipt their golden tresses,
To fringe a cloak for thee.
One handful yet is wanting,
But one of all the tale;
So hey bonny boat, and ho bonny boat!
Furl up thy velvet sail!'

He leapt into the water,
That rover young and bold;
He gript Earl Haldan's daughter,
He clipt her locks of gold;
'Go weep, go weep, proud maiden,
The tale is full to-day.
Now hey bonny boat, and ho bonny boat!
Sail westward ho away!'

C. KINGSLEY

51. JOHNNY

Johnny had a golden head
Like a golden mop in blow,
Right and left his curls would spread
In a glory and a glow,
And they framed his honest face
Like stray sunbeams out of place.

Long and thick, they half could hide
How threadbare his patched jacket hung;
They used to be his mother's pride;
She praised them with her tender tongue,
And stroked them with a loving finger
That smoothed and stroked and loved to linger.

On a doorstep Johnny sat,
 Up and down the street looked he ;
 Johnny did not own a hat,
 Hot or cold tho' days might be ;
 Johnny did not own a boot
 To cover up his muddy foot.

Johnny's face was pale and thin,
 Pale with hunger and with crying ;
 For his mother lay within,
 Talked and tossed and seemed a-dying,
 While Johnny racked his brains to think
 How to get her help and drink,

Get her physic, get her tea,
 Get her bread and something nice ;
 Not a penny piece had he,
 And scarce a shilling might suffice ;
 No wonder that his soul was sad,
 When not one penny piece he had.

As he sat there thinking, moping,
 Because his mother's wants were many,
 Wishing much but scarcely hoping
 To earn a shilling or a penny,
 A friendly neighbour passed him by
 And questioned him : Why did he cry ?

Alas ! his trouble soon was told :
 He did not cry for cold or hunger,
 Though he was hungry both and cold ;
 He only felt more weak and younger
 Because he wished so to be old
 And apt at earning pence or gold.

Kindly that neighbour was, but poor,
Scant coin had he to give or lend;
And well he guessed there needed more
Then pence or shillings to befriend
The helpless woman in her strait,
So much loved, yet so desolate.

One way he saw, and only one:
He would—he could not—give the advice,
And yet he must: the widow's son
Had curls of gold would fetch their price;
Long curls which might be clipped, and sold
For silver or perhaps for gold.

Our Johnny, when he understood
Which shop it was that purchased hair,
Ran off as briskly as he could,
And in a trice stood cropped and bare,
Too short of hair to fill a locket,
But jingling money in his pocket.

Precious money—tea and bread,
Physic, ease, for mother dear,
Better than a golden head:
Yet our hero dropped one tear
When he spied himself close shorn,
Barer much than lamb new born.

His mother throve upon the money,
Ate and revived and kissed her son:
But oh! when she perceived her Johnny,
And understood what he had done,
All and only for her sake,
She sobbed as if her heart must break.

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI

52. OSCAR, THE DOG OF SANDA

The sun was sinking in the west,
 Lurid and red sank he,
 While a little band stood on the land
 And gazed out on the sea.

The farewell gleam of dying day
 Shone on a sailor's form,
 As he clung to the deck of a battered wreck
 That drove before the storm.

'Alas! alas!' the gazers cried,
 As darker grew the sky,
 'Must he find a grave 'neath the rushing wave?
 What a dreadful death to die!'

A giant billow sweeps the deck;
 He has loosed his hold at last,
 And his drowning cry came shrilly by
 Upon the stormy blast.

See! see! a dog with leap and bound
 Speeds down the rugged steep:
 Ere the eye can wink, from the rocky brink
 He plunges in the deep.

High on the waves, and low between,
 He breasts the angry sea;
 Away from the shore, through the stormy roar,
 Right onward swimmeth he.

Speed, Oscar! speed, thou noble dog,
 Upon thy fearful path!
 Speed, Oscar! speed, nor hear nor heed
 The raving tempest's wrath!

He hath seized the sailor ere he sinks :
He holds him firm and tight ;
And back to the shore, through the stormy roar
He strains with all his might.

No word is said, no breath is drawn,
Among the little band,
As through surf and spray he breasts his way
And gains the rocky land.

Long, long in Sanda's lonely isle
This story shall be told ;
And coming days shall hear the praise
Of Oscar true and bold.

53. SIR PATRICK SPENS

The King sits in Dumfermline town
Drinking the blood-red wine,
'O where shall I get a skilful skipper
To sail this ship of mine?'

Then up and spake an elder knight,
Sat at the King's right knee :
'Sir Patrick Spens is the best sailor
That ever sailed the sea.'

The King has written a broad letter,
And sealed it with his hand,
And sent it to Sir Patrick Spens,
Was walking on the sand.

'To Noroway, to Noroway,
To Noroway over the foam ;
The King's daughter to Noroway
It's thou must bring her home.'

The first line Sir Patrick read
And loud laugh laughéd he,
The next line that Sir Patrick read
The tear blinded his e'e.

'O who is this has done this deed,
And told the King of me,
To send us out, at this time o' the year,
To sail upon the sea?'

They hoisted their sails on a Monday morn
With all the haste they may,
And they have landed in Noroway
Upon the Wednesday.

They had not been a week, a week
In Noroway, but twae,
When that the lords of Noroway
Began aloud to say

'Ye Scotsmen spend all our King's gold
And all our Queen's fee.'
'Ye lie, ye lie, ye liars loud,
So loud I hear ye lie.

'For I brought as much of the white money
To keep my men and me,
And a half-fou of the good red gold
Out over the sea with me.

'Be it wind or wet, be it snow or sleet,
Our ship shall sail the morn.'
'Woe ever alack, my master dear,
I fear a deadly storm.'

'I saw the new moon late yestereen,
With the old moon in her arm;
And I fear, I fear, my master dear,
That we shall come to harm!'

They had not sailed a league, a league,
A league but barely three,
When the sky grew dark, and the wind blew loud,
And stormy grew the sea.

The ropes they brake, the top masts lap,
It was such a deadly storm,
And the waves came o'er the broken ship
Till all her sides were torn.

'Go fetch a web of the silken cloth,
Another of the twine,
And wrap them into the good ship's side
And let not the sea come in.'

They fetched a web of the silken cloth,
Another of the twine,
And wrapped them into the good ship's side,
But still the sea came in.

O loth, loth were our good Scots lords
To wet their cork-heel'd shoon;
But long ere all the play was played
They swam, their hats aboon.

O long, long may the ladies sit
With their fans into their hand,
Before they see Sir Patrick Spens
Come sailing to the land!

And long, long may the maidens sit
With their gold combs in their hair,
All waiting for their own dear loves!
For them they'll see no mair.

Half o'er, half o'er to Aberdeen,
It's fifty fathoms deep;
And there lies good Sir Patrick Spens,
With the Scots lords at his feet,

OLD BALLAD

54. THE DISCOVERER OF THE NORTH CAPE

Othere, the old sea-captain,
 Who dwelt in Helgoland,
 To King Alfred, the Lover of Truth,
 Brought a snow-white walrus-tooth,
 Which he held in his brown right hand.

His figure was tall and stately,
 Like a boy's his eye appeared ;
 His hair was yellow as hay,
 But threads of a silvery grey
 Gleamed in his tawny beard.

Hearty and hale was Othere,
 His cheek had the colour of oak ;
 With a kind of laugh in his speech,
 Like the sea-tide on a beach,
 As unto the King he spoke.

And Alfred, King of the Saxons,
 Had a book upon his knees,
 And wrote down the wondrous tale
 Of him who was first to sail
 Into the Arctic seas.

'So far I live to the northward,
 No man lives north of me ;
 To the east are wild mountain-chains,
 And beyond them meres and plains ;
 To the westward all is sea.

So far I live to the northward,
 From the harbour of Skeringes-hale,
 If you only sailed by day
 With a fair wind all the way,
 More than a month would you sail.

I own six hundred reindeer,
With sheep and swine beside ;
I have tribute from the Finns,
Whalebone and reindeer-skins,
And ropes of walrus-hide.

I ploughed the land with horses,
But my heart was ill at ease,
For the old seafaring men
Came to me now and then,
With their sagas of the seas :—

Of Iceland and of Greenland,
And the stormy Hebrides,
And the undiscovered deep ;—
I could not eat nor sleep
For thinking of those seas.

To the northward stretched the desert,
How far I fain would know ;
So at last I sallied forth,
And three days sailed due north,
As far as the whale-ships go.

To the west of me was the ocean,
To the right the desolate shore,
But I did not slacken sail
For the walrus or the whale,
Till after three days more.

The days grew longer and longer,
Till they became as one,
And southward through the haze
I saw the sullen blaze
Of the red midnight sun.

And then uprose before me,
Upon the water's edge,
The huge and haggard shape
Of that unknown North Cape,
Whose form is like a wedge.

The sea was rough and stormy,
The tempest howled and wailed,
And the sea-fog, like a ghost,
Haunted that dreary coast,
But onward still I sailed.

Four days I steered to eastward,
Four days without a night :
Round in a fiery ring
Went the great sun, O King,
With red and lurid light.'

Here Alfred, King of the Saxons,
Ceased writing for a while ;
And raised his eyes from his book,
With a strange and puzzled look,
And an incredulous smile.

But Othere the old sea-captain,
He neither paused nor stirred,
Till the King listened, and then
Once more took up his pen,
And wrote down every word.

'And now the land,' said Othere,
'Bent southward suddenly,
And I followed the curving shore,
And ever southward bore
Into a nameless sea.

And there we hunted the walrus,
The narwhale, and the seal;
Ha! 'twas a noble game!
And like the lightning's flame
Flew our harpoons of steel.

There were six of us all together,
Norsemen of Helgoland;
In two days and no more
We killed of them threescore,
And dragged them to the strand.'

Here Alfred, the Truth-Teller,
Suddenly closed his book,
And lifted his blue eyes,
With doubt and strange surmise
Depicted in their look.

And Othere, the old sea-captain,
Stared at him wild and weird,
Then smiled till his shining teeth
Gleamed white from underneath
His tawny, quivering beard.

And to the King of the Saxons,
In witness of the truth,
Raising his noble head,
He stretched his brown hand, and said,
'Behold this walrus-tooth!'

H. W. LONGFELLOW

55. JOHN MAYNARD

'Twas on Lake Erie's broad expanse,
One bright midsummer day,
The gallant steamer Ocean Queen
Swept proudly on her way.

Bright faces clustered on the deck
Or, leaning o'er the side,
Watched carelessly the feathery foam
That flecked the rippling tide.

A seaman sought the captain's side,
A moment whispered low;
The captain's swarthy face grew pale,
He hurried down below.

The bad news quickly reached the deck,
It sped from lip to lip,
And ghastly faces everywhere
Looked from the doomed ship.

'Is there no hope—no chance of life?'
A hundred lips implore;
'But one,' the captain made reply,
'To run the ship on shore.'

A sailor whose heroic soul
That hour should yet reveal—
By name John Maynard, eastern born—
Stood calmly at the wheel.

'Head her south-east!' the captain shouts,
Above the smothered roar,
'Head her south-east without delay!
Make for the nearest shore!'

John Maynard watched the nearing flames,
But still, with steady hand
He grasped the wheel, and steadfastly
He steered the ship to land.

'John Maynard,' with an anxious voice,
The captain cries once more,
'Stand by the wheel five minutes yet,
And we will reach the shore.'

Through flames and smoke that dauntless heart
Responded firmly, still
Unawed, though face to face with death,
‘With God’s good help, I will!’

The flames approach with giant strides,
They scorch his hands and brow;
One arm disabled seeks his side,
Ah, he is conquered now!

But no, his teeth are firmly set,
He crushes down the pain —
His knee upon the stanchion pressed,
He guides the ship again.

One moment yet! one moment yet!
Brave heart thy task is o’er!
The pebbles grate beneath the keel,
The steamer touches shore.

But where is he, that helmsman bold?
The captain saw him reel —
His nerveless hands released their task,
He sunk beside the wheel:

The waves received his lifeless corpse,
Blackened with smoke and fire.
God rest him! Hero never had
A nobler funeral pyre!

56. THE HARE WITH MANY FRIENDS

A Hare, who, in a civil way,
Complied with everything, like GAY,
Was known by all the bestial train
That haunt the wood or graze the plain.
Her care was never to offend,
And every creature was her friend.

As forth she went at early dawn,
To taste the dew-besprinkled lawn,
Behind she hears the hunter's cries,
And from the deep-mouthed thunder flies:
She starts, she stops, she pants for breath;
She hears the near advance of death;
She doubles, to mislead the hound,
And measures back her mazy round;
Till, fainting in the public way,
Half dead with fear she gasping lay;
What transport in her bosom grew
When first the Horse appeared in view!
'Let me,' says she, 'your back ascend,
And owe my safety to a friend.
You know my feet betray my flight;
To friendship every burden's light.'
The Horse replied: 'Poor honest Puss,
It grieves my heart to see thee thus;
Be comforted; relief is near,
For all your friends are in the rear.'

She next the stately Bull implored,
And thus replied the mighty lord:
'Since every beast alive can tell
That I sincerely wish you well,
I may, without offence, pretend
To take the freedom of a friend.
Love calls me hence; a favourite cow
Expects me near yon barley-mow;
And when a lady's in the case,
You know, all other things give place.
To leave you thus might seem unkind;
But see, the Goat is just behind.'

The Goat remarked her pulse was high,
Her languid head, her heavy eye:
'My back,' says he, 'may do you harm;
The Sheep's at hand, and wool is warm.'

The Sheep was feeble, and complained
His sides a load of wool sustained :
Said he was slow, confessed his fears,
For hounds eat sheep as well as hares.

She now the trotting Calf addressed,
To save from death a friend distressed.
'Shall I,' says he, 'of tender age,
In this important care engage?
Older and abler passed you by ;
How strong are those, how weak am I !
Should I presume to bear you hence,
Those friends of mine may take offence.
Excuse me, then. You know my heart ;
But dearest friends, alas ! must part.
How shall we all lament ! Adieu !
For, see, the hounds are just in view !'

J. GAY

57. THE TOWN AND THE COUNTRY MOUSE

Once on a time (so runs the fable)
A country mouse, right hospitable,
Received a town mouse at his board,
Just as a farmer might a lord.
A frugal mouse upon the whole,
Yet loved his friends, and had a soul :
Knew what was handsome in a host,
And never stayed to count the cost.
He brought him bacon, nothing lean ;
Pudding, the richest ever seen ;
Cheese, such as men in Suffolk make,
But wished it Stilton for his sake ;
Yet, to his guest though no way sparing,
He ate himself the rind and paring.

Our courtier scarce could touch a bit,
But showed his breeding and his wit;
He did his best to seem to eat,
And cried,—‘I vow, you’re mighty neat:
But, my dear friend, this savage scene!
I pray you, come and live with men:
Consider, mice, like men, must die,
Both small and great; both you and I:
Then speed your life in joy and sport,
This doctrine, friend, I learned at court.’

The veriest hermit in the nation
May yield, ’tis known, to strong temptatic...
Away they come, through thick and thin,
To a tall house near Lincoln’s Inn.

Behold the place! where, if a poet
Shined in description, he might show it;
Tell how the moonbeam trembling falls,
And tips with silver all the walls;
Palladian walls, Venetian doors,
Grotesco roofs, and stucco floors:
But let it, in a word, be said,
The moon was up, and men abed:
The guests withdrawn had left the treat;
And there the mice sat down to eat.

Our courtier walks from dish to dish,
Tastes for his friend of fowl and fish;
Tells all their names, quite glib and pat:
‘How good this is; oh, pray taste that!
That jelly’s rich, this malmsey healing;
Pray dip your whiskers and your tail in.’
Was ever such a happy swain?
He stuffs and swills, and stuffs again:
‘I’m quite ashamed—’tis mighty rude
To eat so much—but all’s so good!
I have a thousand thanks to give—
My lord alone knows how to live.’

No sooner said, but from the hall
Rush guests and host, and dogs, and all;
'A rat, a rat! clap to the door,'
The cat comes bouncing on the floor.
Oh for the heart of Homer's mice,
Or gods to save them in a trice!
And, when the mice at last had stole,
With trembling hearts, into a hole,
'An't please your honour,' quoth the peasant,
'This same dessert is not so pleasant.
'Give me again my hollow tree,
'A crust of bread, and liberty.'

A. POPE

✓ 58. A HARD BARGAIN

Abdul Kareem, the Fadêli Sheikh,
Brought to the Pasha a clean-bred mare,
All radiant bay with a snow-white flake;
Never a drop but of pure blood there;
'See her fearless step and her broad eyes gleam,
She's a steed for the Kaliph,' said Abdul Kareem.

Long was the chaffering, loud the discourse,
To settle her price was a day's hard work;
But the man of the desert could stay like his horse
And he wearied the soul of the Stamboul Turk;
Who sent for his treasurer, counted the gold—
'Two thousand, I have her, the mare is sold;

'But the sum is extortionate, double your due;
I am cheated and robbed by a Bedouin thief;
Should a Mussulman trade like a miserly Jew?
Should gold be the god of an Arab chief?
You can take off your booty, my cash with my curse';
The Arab said nought, as he tied up the purse,

But—'One last farewell to the beast I've bred,
To the pride of my house, ere I leave her there';
So he kissed the star on her stately head—
Then he leapt on the back of the bright bay mare,
He shot through the gateway, and rode down the street;
The Pasha sprang up at the clatter of feet;

Two score troopers in harness stood;
'Mount,' cried the Pasha, 'and ride with a will,
Bring me the mare back, take his blood;
The money is yours if the man you kill,'—
Down the steep stony causeway they closed on him fast,
But he gained the town gate and the desert at last.

Mile after mile he canters in front:
They may gallop in vain, though he's always near;
Is he riding a race, is he leading a hunt?
'Ten lances' length between dogs and deer—
Till he touched the mare's quarter, and lowering his hand
Sailed far out of sight o'er the level sand.

Sadly the Pasha rose next day;
Who is it calls from the court without?
'Tis the Arab chief on his clean-bred bay
With her calm wide eye and her unstained coat;
And he said, as he lighted and loosened her girth,
'O Pasha, the gold, is it double her worth?

'She has shown you her paces and proved her blood;
You have lamed ten horses her mettle to try;
You have sworn more oaths than a Mussulman should;
Will you choose now your cash, or the beast to buy,
Or one more heat o'er the desert course?'
'Begone,' said the Pasha, 'and leave me the horse.'

SIR A. LYALL

59. CHILD LOST IN SNOW

It was a clear, cold, winter night,
The heavens were brightly starred,
When on St. Bernard's snowy height
The good monks kept their guard.

Around their hearth that night they told
To one, who shelter craved,
How the brave dog he thought so old
Full forty lives had saved;

When suddenly with kindling eye
Up sprang the old dog there,
As from afar a child's shrill cry
Rang through the frosty air.

In haste the monks unbarred the door,
Rugs round the mastiffs threw;
And as they bounded forth once more,
Called, 'Blessings be with you!'

They hurried headlong down the hill,
Past many a snow-drift wild,
Until the older dog stood still
Beside a sleeping child.

He licked the little icy hand
With his rough, kindly tongue;
With his warm breath he gently fanned
The tresses fair and long.

The child looked up, with eyes of blue,
As if the whole he guessed;
His arms around the dog he threw,
And sank again to rest.

Once more he woke and wrapped him fast
In the warm covering sent :
The dogs then with their charge at last
Up the steep mountain went.

The fire glowed bright with heaped-up logs ;
Each monk brought forth a light ;
'Good dogs !' the stranger cried, 'good dogs !
Whom bring you here to night ?'

In with a joyous bound they come ;
The boy awoke and smiled :
'Ah me !' the stranger cried, 'some home
Mourneth for thee, fair child.'

With morning light the monk and boy
Sought where the village lay ;
I dare not try to paint the joy
Their coming gave that day.

✓ 60. THE POND

There was a round pond, and a pretty pond too ;
About it white daisies and violets grew,
And dark weeping willows, that stoop to the ground,
Dipped in their long branches, and shaded it round.

A party of ducks to this pond would repair,
To feast on the green water-weeds that grew there :
Indeed, the assembly would frequently meet
To discuss their affairs in this pleasant retreat.

Now the subjects on which they were wont to converse
I'm sorry I cannot include in verse ;
For, though I've oft listened in hopes of discerning,
I own 'tis a matter that baffles my learning.

One day a young chicken that lived thereabout
Stood watching to see the ducks pass in and out,
Now standing tail upward, now diving below :
She thought of all things she should like to do so.

So the poor silly chick was determined to try ;
She thought 'twas as easy to swim as to fly ;
Though her mother had told her she must not go near,
She foolishly thought there was nothing to fear.

'My feet, wings, and feathers, for aught that I see,
As good as the ducks' are for swimming,' said she ;
'Though *my* beak is pointed, and *their* beaks are round,
Is that any reason that I should be drowned?

'Why should I not swim, then, as well as a duck?
I think I shall venture, and e'en try my luck !
For,' said she—spite of all that her mother had taught
her—
'I'm really remarkably fond of the water.'

So in this poor ignorant animal flew,
But soon found her dear mother's cautions were true ;
She splashed, and she dashed, and she turned herself
round,
And heartily wished herself safe on the ground.

But now 'twas too late to begin to repent ;
The harder she struggled the deeper she went,
And when every effort had vainly been tried,
She slowly sunk down to the bottom and died !

The ducks, I perceived, began loudly to quack
When they saw the poor fowl floating dead on its back ;
And, by their grave gestures and looks, 'twas apparent
They discoursed on the sin of not minding a parent.

JANE TAYLOR

✓61. THE BAILIFF'S DAUGHTER OF ISLINGTON

There was a youth, and a well-belovéd youth,
And he was a squire's son;
He loved the bailiff's daughter dear,
That lived in Islington.

Yet she was coy, and would not believe
That he did love her so;
No, nor at any time would she
Any countenance to him show.

But when his friends did understand
His fond and foolish mind,
They sent him up to fair London
An apprentice for to bind.

And when he had been seven long years
And never his love could see:
'Many a tear have I shed for her sake,
When she little thought of me.'

Then all the maids of Islington
Went forth to sport and play,
All but the bailiff's daughter dear;
She secretly stole away.

She pulléd off her gown of green,
And put on ragged attire,
And to fair London she would go
Her true love to enquire.

And as she went along the high road,
The weather being hot and dry,
She sat her down upon a green bank,
And her true love came riding by.

She started up, with a colour so red,
Catching hold of his bridle-rein ;
'One penny, one penny, kind sir,' she said,
'Will ease me of much pain.'

'Before I give you one penny, sweetheart,
Pray tell me where you were born.'
'At Islington, kind sir,' said she,
'Where I have had many a scorn.'

'I prithee, sweetheart, then tell to me,
O tell me, whether you know
The bailiff's daughter of Islington.'
'She is dead, sir, long ago.'

'If she be dead, then take my horse,
My saddle and bridle also ;
For I will into some far country,
Where no man shall me know.'

'O stay, O stay, thou goodly youth,
She standeth by thy side ;
She is here alive, she is not dead,
And ready to be thy bride.'

'O farewell grief, and welcome joy,
Ten thousand times therefore ;
For now I have found mine own true love,
Whom I thought I should never see more.'

OLD BALLAD

62. ADELGITHA

The ordeal's fatal trumpet sounded
And sad pale Adelgitha came,
When forth a valiant champion bounded,
And slew the slanderer of her fame.

She wept, deliver'd from her danger ;
 But when he knelt to claim her glove—
 'Seek not,' she cried, 'oh! gallant stranger,
 For hapless Adelgitha's love.

'For he is in a foreign far land
 Whose arms should now have set me free;
 And I must wear the willow garland
 For him that's dead or false to me.'

'Nay! say not that his faith is tainted!'
 He raised his vizor—at the sight
 She fell into his arms and fainted;
 It was indeed her own true knight!

T. CAMPBELL

63. GUILD'S SIGNAL

Two low whistles, quaint and clear,
 That was the signal the engineer—
 That was the signal that Guild, 'tis said—
 Gave to his wife at Providence,
 As through the sleeping town, and thence,
 Out in the night
 On to the light,
 Down past the farms, lying white, he sped!

As a husband's greeting, scant, no doubt,
 Yet to the woman looking out,
 Watching and waiting, no serenade,
 Love song, or midnight roundelay
 Said what that whistle seemed to say:
 'To my trust true,
 So love to you!
 Working or waiting, good-night!' it said.

Brisk young bagmen, tourists fine,
Old commuters along the line,
 Brakemen and porters glanced ahead,
Smiled as the signal, sharp, intense,
Pierced through the shadows of Providence:
 'Nothing amiss —
 Nothing! — It is
Only Guild calling his wife,' they said.

Summer and winter the old refrain
Rang o'er the billows of ripening grain;
 Pierced through the budding boughs o'erhead;
Flew down the track when the red leaves burned
Like living coals from the engine spurned;
 Sang, as it flew,
 'To our trust be true;
First of all, duty—good-night,' it said.

And then, one night, it was heard no more
From Stonington over Rhode Island shore;
 And the folk in Providence smiled and said,
As they turned in their beds: 'The engineer
Has once forgotten his midnight cheer.'
 One only knew,
 To his trust true,
Guild lay under his engine, dead!

F. BRET HARTE

64. CANUTE AND THE TIDE

King Canute was weary-hearted; he had reigned for years
a score,
Battling, struggling, pushing, fighting, killing much and
robbing more;
And he thought upon his actions, walking by the wild
sea-shore.

'Leading on my fierce companions,' cried he, 'over storm
and brine,
I have fought and I have conquered. Where was glory
like to mine?'
Loudly all the courtiers echoed: 'Where is glory like to
thine?'

'What avail me all my kingdoms? Weary am I now
and old;
Those fair sons I have begotten long to see me dead
and cold.
Would I were, and quiet buried underneath the silent
mould!...

'Yea, I feel,' replied King Canute, 'that my end is drawing
near.'
'Don't say so,' exclaimed the courtiers (striving each to
squeeze a tear).
'Sure your Grace is strong and lusty, and may live this fifty
year.'

'Live these fifty years!' the Bishop roared, with actions
made to suit.
'Are you mad, my good Lord Keeper, thus to speak of
King Canute?
Men have lived a thousand years, and sure His Majesty
will do't.

'Did not once the Jewish captain stay the sun upon the hill,
And, the while he slew the foemen, bid the silver moon
stand still?
So, no doubt, could gracious Canute, if it were his sacred will.'

'Might I stay the sun above us, good Sir Bishop?' Canute
cried;
'Could I bid the silver moon to pause upon her heavenly
ride?
If the moon obeys my orders, sure I can command the tide.'

'Will the advancing waves obey me, Bishop, If I make the sign?'

Said the Bishop, bowing lowly, 'Land and sea, my Lord, are thine.'

Canute turned towards the ocean—'Back!' he said, 'thou foaming brine.

'From the sacred shore I stand on, I command thee to retreat ;

Venture not, thou stormy rebel, to approach thy master's seat.
Ocean, be thou still! I bid thee come not nearer to my feet!'

But the sullen ocean answered with a louder, deeper roar,
And the rapid waves drew nearer, falling sounding on the shore,

Back the Keeper and the Bishop, back the King and courtiers bore.

And he sternly bade them never more to kneel to human clay,

But alone to praise and worship That which earth and seas obey ;

And his golden crown of empire never wore he from that day.

W. M. THACKERAY

65. THE ENCHANTED SHIRT

The King was sick. His cheek was red

And his eye was clear and bright ;

He ate and drank with kingly zest,

And peacefully snored at night.

But he said he was sick—and a King should know,

And doctors came by the score.

They did not cure him. He cut off their heads

And sent to the schools for more.

At last two famous doctors came,
And one was as poor as a rat,—
He had passed his life in studious toil,
And never found time to grow fat.

The other had never looked in a book;
His patients gave him no trouble,
If they recovered, they paid him well,
If they died, their heirs paid double.

Together they looked at the royal tongue,
As the King on his couch reclined;
In succession they thumped his august chest,
But no trace of disease could find.

The old sage said, 'You're as sound as a nut,'
'Hang him up!' roared the King in a gale,
In a ten-knot gale of royal rage;
The other leech grew a shade pale;

But he pensively rubbed his sagacious nose,
And thus his prescription ran—
*The King will be well if he sleeps one night
In the Shirt of a Happy Man.*

Wide o'er the realm the couriers rode,
And fast their horses ran,
And many they saw, and to many they spoke,
But they found no Happy Man.

They found poor men who would fain be rich,
And rich who thought they were poor;
And men who twisted their waists in stays,
And women that short-hose wore.

They saw two men by the roadside sit,
And both bemoaned their lot;
For one had buried his wife, he said,
And the other one had not.

At last they came to a village gate,
A beggar lay whistling there ;
He whistled, and sang, and laughed, and rolled
On the grass in the soft June air.

The weary couriers paused and looked
At the scamp so blithe and gay ;
And one of them said, ' Heaven save you, friend,
You seem to be happy to-day.'

' O yes, fair Sirs,' the rascal laughed,
And his voice rang free and glad,
' An idle man has so much to do
That he never has time to be sad.'

' This is our man,' the courier said ;
' Our luck has led us aright.
I will give you a hundred ducats, friend,
For the loan of your shirt to-night.'

The merry blackguard lay back on the grass,
And laughed till his face was black ;
' I would do it, God wot,' and he roared with the fun,
' But I haven't a shirt to my back.'

Each day to the King the reports came in
Of his unsuccessful spies,
And the sad panorama of human woes
Passed daily under his eyes.

And he grew ashamed of his useless life,
And his maladies hatched in gloom ;
He opened his windows and let the air
Of the free heaven into his room.

And out he went in the world and toiled
In his own appointed way ;
And the people blessed him, the land was glad,
And the King was well and gay.

J. HAY

66. DARA

When Persia's sceptre trembled in a hand
Weakened by many a vice, and all the land

Was hovered over by those vulture ills
That sniff decaying empire from afar,
Then, with a nature balanced as a star,
Dara arose, a shepherd of the hills.

He who had governed fleecy subjects well
Made his own village, by the self-same spell,
Secure and quiet as a guarded fold;
Then gathering strength by slow and wise degrees
Under his sway to neighbour villages
Order returned, and faith and justice old.

Now, when it fortune'd that a king more wise
Endued the realm with brain, and hand, and eyes,
He sought on every side men brave and just;
And having heard our mountain shepherd's praise,
How he refilled the mould of elder days,
To Dara gave a satrapy in trust.

So Dara shepherded a province wide,
Nor in his viceroy's sceptre took more pride
Than in his crook before: but envy finds
More food in cities than on mountains bare,
And the frank sun of natures clear and rare
Breeds poisonous fogs in low and marish minds.

Soon it was hissed into the royal ear
That though wise Dara's province, year by year,
Like a great sponge, sucked wealth and plenty up,
Yet when he squeezed it at the king's behest,
Some yellow drops, more rich than all the rest,
Went to the filling of his private cup.

For proof, they said that, wheresoe'er he went,
A chest, beneath whose weight the camel bent,
Went with him; and no mortal eye had seen
What was therein, save only Dara's own;
But when 'twas opened, all his tent was known
To glow and lighten with heaped jewels' sheen.

The king set forth for Dara's province straight,
There, as was fit, outside the city's gate
The viceroy met him with a stately train,
And there, with archers circled, close at hand,
A camel with the chest was seen to stand;
The king's brow reddened, for the guilt was plain.

'Open me here,' he cried, 'this treasure-chest!'
'Twas done; and only a worn shepherd's vest
Was found therein! Some blushed and hung the head.
Not Dara; open as the sky's blue roof
He stood, and, 'O my lord, behold the proof
That I was faithful to my trust!' he said.

'To govern men, lo, all the spell I had!
My soul, in these rude vestments ever clad,
Still to the unstained past kept true and leal,
Still on these plains could breathe the mountain air,
And fortune's heaviest gifts serenely bear,
Which bend men from their truth and make them reel,

'For ruling wisely I should have small skill,
Were I not lord of simple Dara still;
That sceptre kept, I could not lose my way.'
Strange dew in royal eyes grew round and bright,
And stained the throbbing lids: before 'twas night
Two added provinces blest Dara's sway.

J. R. LOWELL

67. THE FAKENHAM GHOST

The lawns were dry in Euston park ;
 (Here Truth inspires my tale)
The lonely footpath, still and dark,
 Led over hill and dale.

Benighted was an ancient dame,
 And fearful haste she made
To gain the vale of Fakenham
 And hail its willow shade.

Her footsteps knew no idle stops,
 But followed faster still,
And echoed to the darksome copse
 That whispered on the hill ;

Where clamorous rooks, yet scarcely hushed,
 Bespoke a peopled shade,
And many a wing the foliage brushed,
 And hovering circuits made.

The dappled herd of grazing deer,
 That sought the shades by day,
Now started from her path with fear,
 And gave the stranger way.

Darker it grew ; and darker fears
 Came o'er her troubled mind ;—
When now a short quick step she hears
 Come patting close behind.

She turned ; it stopped ; nought could she see
 Upon the gloomy plain !
But as she strove the sprite to flee,
 She heard the same again.

Now terror seized her quaking frame,
For, where the path was bare,
The trotting Ghost kept on the same;
She muttered many a prayer.

Yet once again, amidst her fright,
She tried what sight could do;
When through the cheating glooms of night
A monster stood in view.

Regardless of whate'er she felt,
It followed down the plain!
She owned her sins, and down she knelt
And said her prayers again.

Then on she sped; and hope grew strong,
The white park gate in view;
Which pushing hard, so long it swung
That Ghost and all passed through.

Loud fell the gate against the post!
Her heart-string like to crack;
For much she feared the grisly Ghost
Would leap upon her back.

Still on, pat, pat, the goblin went,
As it had done before;
Her strength and resolution spent,
She fainted at the door.

Out came her husband, much surprised,
Out came her daughter dear;
Good-natured souls! all unadvised
Of what they had to fear.

The candle's gleam pierced through the night,
Some short space o'er the green;
And there the little trotting sprite
Distinctly might be seen.

An ass's foal had lost its dam
Within the spacious park;
And simple as the playful lamb
Had followed in the dark.

No goblin he; no imp of sin;
No crimes had ever known;
They took the shaggy stranger in,
And reared him as their own.

His little hoofs would rattle round
Upon the cottage floor;
The matron learned to love the sound
That frightened her before.

A favourite the Ghost became,
And 'twas his fate to thrive;
And long he lived and spread his fame,
And kept the joke alive.

For many a laugh went through the vale;
And some conviction too:
Each thought some other goblin tale,
Perhaps, was just as true.

R. BLOOMFIELD

68. NAPOLEON AND THE BRITISH SAILOR

I love contemplating—apart
- From all his homicidal glory—
The traits that soften to our heart
Napoleon's story.

'Twas when his banners at Boulogne
Armed in our island every freeman,
His navy chanced to capture one
Poor British seaman.

They suffered him, I know not how,
Unprisoned on the shore to roam;
And aye was bent his longing brow
On England's home.

His eye, methinks, pursued the flight
Of birds to Britain, half-way over,
With envy—*they* could reach the white
Dear cliffs of Dover.

A stormy midnight watch, he thought,
Than this sojourn would have been dearer,
If but the storm his vessel brought
To England nearer.

At last, when care had banished sleep,
He saw one morning, dreaming, doating,
An empty hogshead from the deep
Come shoreward floating.

He hid it in a cave, and wrought
The live-long day laborious, lurking,
Until he launched a tiny boat
By mighty working.

Heaven help us! 'twas a thing beyond
Description wretched: such a wherry
Perhaps ne'er ventured on a pond,
Or crossed a ferry.

For ploughing in the salt-sea field
It would have made the boldest shudder—
Untarred, uncompassed, and unkeeled,
No sail, no rudder.

From neighbouring wood he interlaced
His sorry skiff with wattled willows;
And thus equipped he would have passed
The foaming billows.

But Frenchmen caught him on the beach,—
His little Argo sorely jeering,
Till tidings of him chanced to reach
Napoleon's hearing.

With folded arms Napoleon stood,
Serene alike in peace and danger;
And, in his wonted attitude,
Addressed the stranger:

'Rash man, that wouldst yon Channel pass
On twigs and staves so rudely fashioned!
Thy heart with some sweet British lass
Must be impassioned.'

'I have no sweetheart,' said the lad;
'But, absent long from one another,
Great was the longing that I had
To see my mother.'

'And so thou shalt,' Napoleon said,
'Ye've both my favour fairly won;
A noble mother must have bred
So brave a son.'

He gave the tar a piece of gold,
And, with a flag of truce, commanded
He should be shipped to England Old,
And safely landed.

Our sailor oft could scantily shift
To find a dinner, plain and hearty;
But never changed the coin and gift
Of Buonaparté.

T. CAMPBELL

69. THE FESTIVAL

Five hundred princely guests before
Haroun Al Raschid sate:
Five hundred princely guests or more
Admired his royal state:

For never had that glory been
So royally displayed,
Nor ever such a gorgeous scene
Had eye of man surveyed.

He, most times meek of heart, yet now
Of spirit too elate,
Exclaimed, 'Before me Cæsars bow,
On me two empires wait,

'Yet all our glories something lack,
We do our triumphs wrong,
Until to us reflected back
In mirrors clear of song.

'Call him, then, unto whom this power
Is given, this skill sublime—
Now win from us some splendid dower
With song that fits the time.'

'My King, as I behold thee now,
May I behold thee still,
While prostrate worlds before thee bow,
And wait upon thy will!

'May evermore this clear, pure heaven,
Whence every speck and stain
Of trouble far away is driven,
Above thy head remain!'

The Caliph cried: 'Thou wishest well;
There waits thee golden store
For this—but, oh! resume the spell,
I fain would listen more.'

'Drink thou life's sweetest goblet up,
O King, and may its wine,
For others' lips a mingled cup,
Be all unmixed for thine.

'Live long—the shadow of no grief
Come ever near to thee:
As thou in height of place art chief,
So chief in gladness be.'

Haroun Al Raschid cried again:
'I thank thee! but proceed—
And now take up a higher strain,
And win a higher meed.'

Around that high magnific hall
One glance the poet threw
On courtiers, king and festival,
And did the strain renew:—

'And yet, and yet—shalt thou at last
Lie stretched on bed of death;
Then, when thou drawest thick and fast
With sobs thy painful breath,

'When Azrael glides through guarded gate,
Through hosts that camp around
Their lord in vain, and will not wait;
When thou art sadly bound

'Unto thine house of dust alone;
O King, when thou must die—
This pomp a shadow thou must own,
This glory all a lie.'

Then darkness on all faces hung,
And through the banquet went
Low sounds the murmuring guests among
Of angry discontent.

And him anon they fiercely urge :
'What guerdon shall be thine ?
What does it, this untimely dirge,
'Mid feasts and flowers and wine ?

'Our Lord demanded, in his mirth,
A strain to heighten glee ;
But, lo ! at thine his tears come forth
In current swift and free.'

'Peace ! not to him rebukes belong,
But rather, higher grace ;
He gave me what I asked—a song
To fit the time and place.'

All voices at that voice were stilled ;
Again the Caliph cried :
'He saw our mouths with laughter filled,
He saw us drunk with pride,

'And bade us know that every road,
By monarch trod or slave,
Thick set with thorns, and roses strewed,
Must issue in the grave.'

ARCHBISHOP TRENCH

70. THE CAPTAIN

He that only rules by terror
Doeth grievous wrong.
Deep as Hell I count his error.
Let him hear my song.

Brave the Captain was : the seamen
Made a gallant crew,
Gallant sons of English freemen,
Sailors bold and true.

But they hated his oppression,
Stern he was and rash ;
So for every light transgression
Doom'd them to the lash.

Day by day more harsh and cruel
Seem'd the Captain's mood,
Secret wrath like smother'd fuel
Burnt in each man's blood.

Yet he hoped to purchase glory,
Hoped to make the name
Of his vessel great in story,
Wheresoe'er he came.

So they past by capes and islands,
Many a harbour-mouth,
Sailing under palmy highlands
Far within the South.

On a day when they were going
O'er the lone expanse,
In the north, her canvas flowing,
Rose a ship of France.

Then the Captain's colour heighten'd,
Joyful came his speech :
But a cloudy gladness lighten'd
In the eyes of each.

'Chase,' he said : the ship flew forward,
And the wind did blow ;
Stately, lightly, went she Norward,
Till she near'd the foe.

Then they look'd at him they hated,
Had what they desired :
Mute with folded arms they waited—
Not a gun was fired.

But they heard the foeman's thunder
Roaring out their doom ;
All the air was torn in sunder,
Crashing went the boom,

Spars were splinter'd, decks were shatter'd,
Bullets fell like rain ;
Over mast and deck were scatter'd
Blood and brains of men.

Spars were splinter'd ; decks were broken :
Every mother's son—
Down they dropt—no word was spoken—
Each beside his gun.

On the decks as they were lying,
Were their faces grim.
In their blood, as they lay dying,
Did they smile on him.

Those, in whom he had reliance
For his noble name,
With one smile of still defiance
Sold him unto shame.

Shame and wrath his heart confounded,
Pale he turn'd and red,
Till himself was deadly wounded
Falling on the dead.

Dismal error ! fearful slaughter !
Years have wander'd by,
Side by side beneath the water
Crew and Captain lie ;

There the sunlit ocean tosses
 O'er them mouldering,
 And the lonely seabird crosses
 With one waft of the wing.

A. TENNYSON

71. THE LEAK IN THE DYKE

The good dame looked from her cottage
 At the close of the pleasant day,
 And cheerily called to her little son
 Outside the door at play:

'Come, Peter, come! I want to see you go,
 While there is light to see,
 To the hut of the blind old man who lives
 Across the dyke, for me;
 And take these cakes I made for him —
 They are hot and smoking yet.
 You have time enough to go and come
 Before the sun is set.'

Then the good wife turned to her labour,
 Humming a simple song,
 And thought of her husband working hard
 At the sluices all day long;
 And set the turf a-blazing,
 And brought the coarse black bread,
 That he might find a fire at night,
 And find the table spread.

And Peter left the brother
 With whom all day he had played,
 And the sister who had watched their sports
 In the willow's tender shade;
 And told him they'd see him back before
 They saw a star in sight,
 Though he wouldn't be afraid to go
 In the very blackest night!

For he was a brave, bright fellow,
With eye and conscience clear;
He could do whatever a boy might do
And he had not learned to fear.
Why, he wouldn't have robbed a bird's nest,
Nor brought a stork to harm,
Though never a law in Holland
Had stood to stay his arm!

And now, with his face all glowing,
And eyes as bright as the day
With the thoughts of his pleasant errand,
He trudged along the way.
And soon his joyous prattle
Made glad a lonesome place—
Alas! if only the blind old man
Could have seen that happy face!
Yet he, somehow, caught the brightness
Which his voice and presence lent;
And he felt the sunshine come and go
As Peter came and went.

And now, as the day was sinking,
And the winds began to rise,
The mother looked from her door again,
Shading her anxious eyes;
And saw the shadows deepen,
And birds to their homes come back;
And never a sign of Peter
Along the level track.
But she said: 'He will come at morning,
So I need not fret or grieve—
Though it isn't like my boy at all
To stay without my leave.'

But where was the child delaying?
On the homeward way was he,
And across the dyke while the sun was up
An hour above the sea.
He was stooping now to gather flowers,
Now listening to the sound,
As the angry waters dashed themselves
Against their narrow bound.
'Ah! well for us,' said Peter,
'That the gates are good and strong,
And my father tends them carefully,
Or they would not hold you long!
'You're a wicked sea,' said Peter;
'I know why you fret and chafe:
You would like to spoil our lands and homes,
But our sluices keep you safe!'

But hark! Through the noise of the waters
Comes a low, clear, trickling sound;
And the child's face pales with terror,
And his blossoms drop to the ground.
He is up the bank in a moment,
And, stealing through the sand,
He sees a stream not yet so large
As his slender, childish hand.
'Tis a leak in the dyke! He is but a boy,
Unused to fearful scenes;
But, young as he is, he has learned to know
The dreadful thing that means.

A leak in the dyke! The stoutest heart
Grows faint that cry to hear,
And the bravest man in all the land
Turns white with mortal fear:
For he knows the smallest leak may grow
To a flood in a single night;
And he knows the strength of the cruel sea
When loosed in its angry might.

And the boy! he has seen the danger,
And, shouting a wild alarm,
He forces back the weight of the sea
With the strength of his single arm!
He listens for the joyful sound
Of a footstep passing nigh;
And he lays his ear to the ground to catch
The answer to his cry.

And he hears the rough wind blowing,
And the waters rise and fall,
But never an answer came to him,
Save the echo of his call.
He sees no hope, no succour—
His feeble voice is lost;
Yet what shall he do but watch and wait,
Though he perish at his post!

So, faintly calling and crying
Till the sun is under the sea,
Crying and moaning till the stars
Come out for company,
He thinks of his brother and sister,
Asleep in their safe, warm bed;
He thinks of his father and mother,
Of himself as dying and dead,
And of how, when the night is over,
They must come and find him at last;
But he never thinks he can leave the place
Where duty holds him fast,

The good dame in the cottage
Is up and astir with the light,
For the thought of her little Peter
Has been with her all night.
And now she watches the pathway,
As yestereve she had done;

But what does she see so strange and black
Against the rising sun?
Her neighbours are bearing between them
Something straight to her door—
The child is coming home, but not
As he ever came before!

'He is dead!' she cries. 'My darling!'
And the startled father hears,
And comes and looks the way she looks,
And fears the thing she fears.

Till a glad shout from the bearers
Thrills the stricken man and wife:
'Give thanks, for your son has saved our land,
And God has saved his life!'
So, there in the morning sunshine,
They knelt about the boy;
And every head was bared and bent
In tearful, reverent joy.

'Tis many a year since then; but still
When the sea roars like a flood,
Their boys are taught what a boy can do
Who is brave, and true, and good.
For every man in that country
Takes his son by the hand,
And tells him of little Peter,
Whose courage saved the land.

They have many a valiant hero,
Remembered through the years;
But never one whose name so oft
Is named with loving tears.
And his deed shall be sung by the cradle,
And told to the child on the knee,
So long as the dykes of Holland
Divide the land from the sea!

PHOEBE CARY

72. THE JESTER CONDEMNED TO DEATH

One of the kings of Scanderoon,
A royal jester,
Had in his train a gross buffoon,
Who used to pester
The Court with tricks inopportune,
Venting on the highest folks his
Scurvy pleasantries and hoaxes.

It needs some sense to play the fool;
Which wholesome rule
Occurr'd not to our jackanapes,
Who consequently found his freaks
Lead to innumerable scrapes,
And quite as many kicks and tweaks,
Which only seemed to make him faster
Try the patience of his master.

Some sin, at last, beyond all measure,
Incurr'd the desperate displeasure
Of his serene and raging highness:
Whether the wag had twitched his beard
Which he was bound to have revered,
Or had intruded on the shyness
Of the seraglio, or let fly
An epigram at royalty,
None knows;—his sin was an occult one,
But records tell us that the Sultan,
Meaning to terrify the knave,
Exclaimed—'Tis time to stop that breath;

'Thy doom is sealed, presumptuous slave!
Thou stand'st condemned to certain death:
Silence, base rebel! no replying!—
But such is my indulgence still,
That, of my own free grace and will
I leave to thee the mode of dying.'

‘Thy royal will be done—’tis just,’
 Replied the wretch, and kissed the dust;
 ‘Since, my last moments to assuage,
 Your Majesty’s humane decree
 Has deigned to leave the choice to me,
 I’ll die, so please you, of old age!’

H. SMITH

73. LADY CLARE

It was the time when lilies blow,
 And clouds are highest up in air,
 Lord Ronald brought a lily-white doe
 To give his cousin, Lady Clare.

I trow they did not part in scorn:
 Lovers long-betroth’d were they:
 They two will wed the morrow morn:
 God’s blessing on the day!

‘He does not love me for my birth,
 Nor for my lands so broad and fair;
 He loves me for my own true worth,
 And that is well,’ said Lady Clare.

In there came old Alice the nurse,
 Said, ‘Who was this that went from thee?’—
 ‘It was my cousin,’ said Lady Clare,
 ‘To-morrow he weds with me.’

‘O God be thanked!’ said Alice the nurse,
 ‘That all comes round so just and fair:—
 Lord Ronald is heir of all your lands,
 And you are not the Lady Clare.’

'Are ye out of your mind, my nurse, my nurse?'

Said Lady Clare, 'that ye speak so wild?'—

'As God's above,' said Alice the nurse,

'I speak the truth—you are my child.

'The old Earl's daughter died at my breast—

I speak the truth, as I live by bread!

I buried her like my own sweet child,

And put my child in her stead.'

'Falsely, falsely have ye done,

O mother,' she said, 'if this be true,

To keep the best man under the sun

So many years from his due.'

'Nay now, my child,' said Alice the nurse,

'But keep the secret for your life,

And all you have will be Lord Ronald's

When you are man and wife.'

'If I'm a beggar born,' she said,

'I will speak out, for I dare not lie;—

Pull off, pull off, the brooch of gold,

And fling the diamond necklace by!'

'Nay now, my child,' said Alice the nurse,

'But keep the secret all ye can.'

She said, 'Not so: but I will know

If there be any faith in man.'

'Nay now, what faith?' said Alice the nurse,

'The man will cleave unto his right.'

'And he shall have it,' the lady replied,

'Tho' I should die to-night.'

'Yet give one kiss to your mother dear!

Alas, my child, I sinn'd for thee.'

'O mother, mother, mother,' she said,

'So strange it seems to me.

'Yet here's a kiss for my mother dear,
My mother dear, if this be so,
And lay your hand upon my head,
And bless me, mother, ere I go.'

She clad herself in a russet gown,
She was no longer Lady Clare:
She went by dale, and she went by down,
With a single rose in her hair.

The lily-white doe Lord Ronald had brought
Leapt up from where she lay,
Dropt her head in the maiden's hand,
And follow'd her all the way.

Down stept Lord Ronald from his tower:
'O Lady Clare, you shame your worth!
Why come you drest like a village maid,
That are the flower of the earth?'

'If I come drest like a village maid,
I am but as my fortunes are:
I am a beggar born,' she said,
'And not the Lady Clare.'

'Play me no tricks,' said Lord Ronald,
'For I am yours in word and in deed.
Play me no tricks,' said Lord Ronald,
'Your riddle is hard to read.'

O and proudly stood she up!
Her heart within her did not fail:
She looked into Lord Ronald's eyes,
And told him all her nurse's tale.

He laugh'd a laugh of merry scorn;
He turn'd and kiss'd her where she stood:
'If you are not the heiress born,
And I,' said he, 'the next in blood—

'If you are not the heiress born,
And I,' said he, 'the lawful heir,
We two will wed to-morrow morn,
And you shall still be Lady Clare.'

A. TENNYSON

74. ONLY A SOLDIER

Unarmed and unattended walks the Czar
Through Moscow's busy street one winter day.
The crowd uncover as his face they see:
'God greet the Czar!' they say.

Along his path there moved a funeral,
Grave spectacle of poverty and woe—
A wretched sledge, dragged by one weary man
Slowly across the snow.

And on the sledge, blown by the winter wind,
Lay a poor coffin, very rude and bare;
And he who drew it bent before his load
With dull and sullen air.

The emperor stopped, and beckoned to the man.
'Who is't thou bearest to the grave?' he said.
'Only a soldier, sire!' the short reply,—
'Only a soldier, dead.'

'Only a soldier!' musing, said the Czar:
'Only a Russian, who was poor and brave.
Move on; I follow. Such an one goes not
Unhonoured to his grave.'

He bent his head and silent raised his cap;
The Czar of all the Russians, pacing slow,
Followed the coffin as again it went
Slowly across the snow.

The passers of the street, all wondering,
Looked on that sight, then followed silently;
Peasant and prince, and artisan and clerk,
All in one company.

Still as they went, the crowd grew ever more,
Till thousands stood around the friendless grave,
Led by that princely heart, who, royal, true,
Honoured the poor and brave.

75. THE NIGHTINGALE AND THE GLOW-WORM

A nightingale, that all day long
Had cheered the village with his song,
Nor yet at eve his note suspended,
Nor yet when eventide was ended,
Began to feel, as well he might,
The keen demands of appetite;
When, looking eagerly around,
He spied far off, upon the ground,
A something shining in the dark,
And knew the glow-worm by his spark;
So, stooping down from hawthorn top,
He thought to put him in his crop.
The worm, aware of his intent,
Harangued him thus, right eloquent—
'Did you admire my lamp,' quoth he,
'As much as I your minstrelsy,
You would abhor to do me wrong,
As much as I to spoil your song;
For 'twas the self-same power divine,
Taught you to sing, and me to shine;
That you with music, I with light,
Might beautify and cheer the night.'
The songster heard his short oration,
And warbling out his approbation,
Released him, as my story tells,
And found a supper somewhere else.

W. COWPER

76. THE FOX AND THE CAT

The fox and the cat, as they travell'd one day,
With moral discourses cut shorter the way :
' 'Tis great,' says the Fox, 'to make justice our guide !'
'How god-like is mercy !' Grimalkin replied.

Whilst thus they proceeded, a wolf from the wood,
Impatient of hunger, and thirsting for blood,
Rush'd forth—as he saw the dull shepherd asleep—
And seiz'd for his supper an innocent sheep.
'In vain, wretched victim, for mercy you bleat,
When mutton's at hand,' says the Wolf, 'I must eat.'

Grimalkin's astonish'd !—the fox stood aghast,
To see the fell beast at his bloody repast.
'What a wretch,' says the Cat, ' 'tis the vilest of brutes ;
Does he feed upon flesh when there's herbage and roots ?'
Cries the Fox, 'While our oaks give us acorns so good,
What a tyrant is this to spill innocent blood !'

Well, onward they march'd, and they moraliz'd still,
Till they came where some poultry pick'd chaff by a mill.
Sly Reynard survey'd them with gluttonous eyes,
And made, spite of morals, a pullet his prize.
A mouse, too, that chanc'd from her covert to stray,
The greedy Grimalkin secured as her prey.

A spider that sat in her web on the wall,
Perceiv'd the poor victims, and pitied their fall ;
She cried, 'Of such murders, how guiltless am I !'
So ran to regale on a new-taken fly.

J. CUNNINGHAM

✓ 77. THE CHAMELEON

Two travellers in friendly chat
Now talked of this, and then of that:
Discoursed awhile, 'mongst other matter,
Of the Chameleon's form and nature.
'A stranger animal,' cries one,
'Sure never lived beneath the sun;
A lizard's body, lean and long,
A fish's head, a serpent's tongue;
Its foot with triple claw disjoined;
And what a length of tail behind!
How slow its pace! And then its hue?
Who ever saw so fine a blue?'

'Hold there,' the other quick replies,
'Tis green; I saw it with these eyes,
As late with open mouth it lay,
And warmed it in the sunny ray;
Stretched at its ease the beast I viewed
And saw it eat the air for food.'

'I've seen it, Sir, as well as you,
And must again affirm 'tis blue;
At leisure I the beast surveyed
Extended in the cooling shade.'

'Tis green, 'tis green, Sir, I assure ye
'Green!' cries the other in a fury—
'Why, Sir, d'ye think I've lost my eyes?'
'Twere no great loss,' the friend replies,
'For if they always serve you thus,
You'll find them of but little use.'

So high at last the contest rose,
From words they almost came to blows ;
When luckily came by a third—
To him the question they referred,
And begged he'd tell them, if he knew,
Whether the thing was green or blue.

'Sirs,' cries the umpire, 'ceased your pother,
The creature's neither one nor t'other :
I caught the animal last night,
And viewed it o'er by candle-light.
I marked it well,—it's black as jet ;
You stare,—but, Sirs, I've got it yet,
And can produce it.' Pray, Sir, do,
I'll lay my life the thing is blue.'

'And I'll be sworn, that, when you've seen
The reptile, you'll pronounce him green.'

'Well then, at once to solve the doubt,'
Replies the man, 'I'll turn him out ;
And when before your eyes I've set him,
If you don't find him black, I'll eat him—'

He said: then full before their sight,
Produced the beast, and lo! 'twas white!
Both start; the man looks wondrous wise.—

'My children,' the Chameleon cries,
(Then first the creature found a tongue,)
'You all are right; and all are wrong ;
When next you talk of what you view,
Think others see as well as you ;
Nor wonder, if you find that none
Prefers your eye-sight to his own.'

J. MERRICK

78. THE PET LAMB

Storm upon the mountain,
Rainy torrents beating,
And the little snow-white lamb
Bleating, ever bleating!
Storm upon the mountain,
Night upon its throne,
And the little snow-white lamb
Left alone, alone!

Down the glen the shepherd
Drives his flock afar;
Through the mirky mist and cloud
Shines no beacon star.
Fast he hurries onward,
Never hears the moan
Of the pretty snow-white lamb,
Left alone, alone!

At the shepherd's doorway
Stands his little son,
Sees the sheep come trooping home,
Counts them, one by one;
Counts them full and fairly—
Trace he findeth none
Of the little snow-white lamb
Left alone, alone!

Up the glen he races,
Breasts the bitter wind,
Scours across the plain, and leaves
Wood and wold behind;—
Storm upon the mountain,
Night upon its throne—
There he finds the little lamb,
Left alone, alone!

Struggling, panting, sobbing,
Kneeling on the ground,
Round the pretty creature's neck
Both his arms are wound;
Soon upon his shoulders,
All its bleatings done,
Home he bears the little lamb,
Left alone, alone!

Oh! the happy faces
By the shepherd's fire!
High without the tempest roars,
But the laugh rings higher,
Young and old together
Make that joy their own—
In their midst the little lamb,
Left alone, alone!

T. WESTWOOD

79. THE CHILDREN IN THE WOOD

Now ponder well, you parents dear,
These words which I shall write;
A doleful story you shall hear,
In time brought forth to light.
A gentleman of good account
In Norfolk dwelt of late,
Who did in honour far surmount
Most men of his estate,

Sore sick he was and like to die,
No help his life could save;
His wife by him as sick did lie,
And both possessed one grave.
No love between these two was lost,
Each was to other kind;
In love they lived, in love they died,
And left two babies behind:

The one a fine and pretty boy,
 Not passing three years old;
 The other a girl more young than he,
 And framed in beauty's mould.
 The father left his little son,
 As plainly doth appear,
 When he to perfect age should come,
 Three hundred pounds a year;

And to his little daughter Jane
 Five hundred pounds in gold
 To be paid down on marriage-day,
 Which might not be controlled.
 But if the children chance to die
 Ere they to age should come,
 Their uncle should possess their wealth;
 For so the will did run.

'Now, brother,' said the dying man,
 'Look to my children dear;
 Be good unto my boy and girl,
 No friends else have they here:
 To God and you I recommend
 My children dear this day;
 But little while be sure we have
 Within this world to stay.

'You must be father and mother both,
 And uncle all in one;
 God knows what will become of them
 When I am dead and gone.'
 With that bespake their mother dear,
 'O brother kind,' quoth she,
 You are the man must bring our babes
 To wealth or misery:

'And if you keep them carefully,
Then God will you reward ;
But if you otherwise should deal,
God will your deeds regard.'
With lips as cold as any stone,
They kissed their children small ;
'God bless you both, my children dear !'
With that the tears did fall.

These speeches then their brother spake
To this sick couple there :
'The keeping of your little ones,
Sweet sister, do not fear :
God never prosper me nor mine,
Nor ought else that I have,
If I do wrong your children dear,
When you are laid in grave.'

The parents being dead and gone,
The children home he takes,
And brings them strait unto his house,
Where much of them he makes.
He had not kept these pretty babes
A twelvemonth and a day,
But, for their wealth, he did devise
To make them both away.

He bargained with two ruffians strong,
Which were of furious mood,
That they should take these children young,
And slay them in a wood.
He told his wife an artful tale,
He would the children send,
To be brought up in fair London,
With one that was his friend.

Away then went those pretty babes
Rejoicing at that tide,
Rejoicing in a merry mind,
They should on cock-horse ride.
They prate and prattle pleasantly
As they rode on the way,
To those that should their butchers be,
And work their lives' decay.

So that the pretty speech they had
Made Murder's heart relent;
And they that undertook the deed
Full sore did now repent.
Yet one of them more hard of heart
Did vow to do his charge,
Because the wretch that hired him
Had paid him very large.

The other won't agree thereto,
So here they fall to strife;
With one another they did fight,
About the children's life;
And he that was of mildest mood
Did slay the other there,
Within an unfrequented wood;
The babes did quake for fear!

He took the children by the hand,
Tears standing in their eye,
And bade them straitway follow him,
And look they did not cry.
And two long miles he led them on,
While they for food complain;
'Stay here,' quoth he; 'I'll bring you bread
When I come back again.'

These pretty babes, with hand in hand,
Went wandering up and down;
But never more could see the man
Approaching from the town:
Their pretty lips with blackberries
Were all besmeared and dyed;
And when they saw the darksome night
They sat them down and cried.

Thus wandered these poor innocents,
Till death did end their grief;
In one another's arms they died,
As wanting due relief:
No burial this pretty pair
Of any man receives,
Till Robin Redbreast piously
Did cover them with leaves.

And now the heavy wrath of God
Upon their uncle fell;
Yea, fearful fiends did haunt his house,
His conscience felt an hell:
His barns were fired, his goods consumed,
His lands were barren made,
His cattle died within the field,
And nothing with him stayed.

And in a voyage to Portugal
Two of his sons did die;
And to conclude, himself was brought
To want and misery:
He pawned and mortgaged all his land
Ere seven years came about;
And now at length this wicked act
Did by this means come out:

The fellow that did take in hand
These children for to kill,
Was for a robbery judged to die,
Such was God's blessed will;
Who did confess the very truth,
As here hath been displayed;
Their uncle having died in gaol
Where he for debt was laid.

You that executors be made
And overseers eke
Of children that be fatherless
And infants mild and meek;
Take you example by this thing,
And yield to each his right,
Lest God with such like misery
Your wicked minds requite.

OLD BALLAD

80. THE DOG AND THE WATER-LILY

The noon was shady, and soft airs
Swept Ouse's silent tide,
When, 'scaped from literary cares,
I wandered on his side.

My spaniel, prettiest of his race,
And high in pedigree,
(Two nymphs, adorned with every grace,
That spaniel found for me)

Now wantoned lost in flags and reeds,
Now starting into sight,
Pursued the swallow o'er the meads
With scarce a slower flight.

It was the time when Ouse displayed
His lilies newly blown ;
Their beauties I intent surveyed ;
And one I wished my own.

With cane extended far I sought
To steer it close to land ;
But still the prize, though nearly caught,
Escaped my eager hand.

Beau marked my unsuccessful pains
With fixt consid'rate face,
And puzzling set his puppy brains
To comprehend the case.

But with a chirrup clear and strong,
Dispersing all his dream,
I thence withdrew, and followed long
The windings of the stream.

My ramble finished, I returned.
Beau trotting far before,
The floating wreath again discerned
And plunging left the shore.

I saw him with that lily cropped,
Impatient swim to meet
My quick approach, and soon he dropped
The treasure at my feet.

Charmed with the sight, the world, I cried,
Shall hear of this thy deed,
My dog shall mortify the pride
Of man's superior breed ;

But, chief, myself I will enjoin,
Awake at duty's call,
To show a love as prompt as thine
To Him who gives me all,

W. COWPER

✓81. THE STRANGER

An aged man came late to Abraham's tent;
 The sky was dark, and all the plain was bare.
 He asked for bread; his strength was well-nigh spent,
 His haggard look implored the tenderest care.
 The food was brought. He sat with thankful eyes,
 But spake no grace, nor bowed towards the east,
 Safe sheltered here from dark and angry sky;
 The bounteous table seemed a royal feast.

But ere his hand had touched the tempting fare,
 The patriarch rose, and leaning on his rod—
 'Stranger,' he said, 'dost thou not bow in prayer?
 Dost thou not fear, dost thou not worship God?'
 He answered, 'Nay'. The patriarch sadly said,
 'Thou hast my pity. Go, eat not my bread.'

Another came that wild and fearful night:
 The fierce winds raged, and darker grew the skies;
 But all the tent was filled with wondrous light,
 And Abraham knew the Lord his God was nigh.
 'Where is that aged man?' the Presence said,
 'That asked for shelter from the driving blast?
 What right hadst thou the wanderer forth to cast?'

'Forgive me, Lord,' the patriarch answer made,
 With downcast look, with bowed and trembling knee.
 'Ah me! the stranger might with me have stayed,
 But, O my God, he would not worship Thee.'
 'I've borne him long,' God said, 'and still I wait;
 Couldst thou not lodge him one night in thy gate?'

W. BRUCE

√82. AN ORIENTAL LEGEND

A king, grown old in glory and renown,
With wisdom wished his happy reign to crown.
Feeling the years turn white upon his head,
He thought upon his end, and thus he said :
'Three sons I have, strong types of sturdy youth,
Bred in all honour, manliness, and truth ;
Honest and brave are they, I know it well ;
But traits there are in all that none may tell.
I'll test them, therefore ; for I fain would know
Which one shall rule the best when I must go.'

Thereon he sent a slave to call his sons
Into his presence. Strong and manly ones
They surely were, to glad a father's sight,
And mind him of his spring-time's manly might.
To whom the king : 'My sons, the time draws near
When I, your sire, shall be no longer here,
And I would know which of you I may trust
To wield the sceptre when my hands are dust ;
And to that end I make you this request,
Which of my three sons loves his father best?'

Then spake the eldest : 'Sire, my love for thee
Is deeper, broader, greater than the sea,
Vast as it is, that wets thy kingdom's shore.
Such is my love for thee, my sire, and more.'
The second then : 'My father and my king,
There is not any yet created thing
In the whole universe, below, above,
To mark the scope and measure of my love.'
The youngest simply said : 'I cannot tell
Thee more than this, I love my father well.'

The king dismissed them with a tender word,
And sat and pondered well what he had heard;
Then called his minister, and to him spake:
'My lord, a pilgrimage I fain would make
To far-famed Mecca, that I may atone
For sins unpardoned; I will go alone,
Barefooted and bareheaded; and if I
By Allah shall be called upon to die
While on this pilgrimage, 'tis my command
That my three sons together rule the land.'

A year went by, and yellow were the leaves,
The ripened grain was gathered into sheaves,
And all made ready for the harvest sport,
When through the kingdom—city, camp, and court,
Seaport and hamlet—the sad news was sped,
That the wise ruler and just king was dead.
Loved as a monarch tender, brave, and true,
His people mourned him deeply as his due.
His sons were told the words the king had said,
And reigned together in their father's stead.

The calendar had marked another year,
And on the drooping stalk the full-grown ear
Through golden husk and silken tassel showed,
When wearily along the dusty road
A beggar slowly moved towards the town.
Outside the open gate he sat him down
And rested. Suddenly his thoughts were bent
Upon a man near by, with garments rent,
Who sighed, and wept, and beat upon his breast,
And ever made this moan, 'I loved him best.'

'Friend,' said the beggar, 'tell, if I may know,
What is the cause and secret of thy woe,
Allah hath certain cure for every ill;
Thine may He soften!' For a moment still
The other sat; then, with fresh tears, he said:
'Great is my loss. I mourn the king that's dead.

Ah! never more shall men see such a one.
He was my father, I his eldest son.'
And then he beat once more upon his breast,
And rent his clothes, and cried, 'I loved him best.'

The beggar sighed. 'Such love must Allah prize.
Thy brothers? mourn they also in this wise?'
'Not so,' the mourner said. 'The next in age
His grief with other thoughts did soon assuage;
With horse and hounds his hours are spent in sport,
To the great shame and sorrow of the court.
The youngest bears the pains and cares of state;
Works out our father's plans; to low and great,
Meteth out justice with impartial hand,
And is beloved and honoured in the land.'

The beggar left the son on grief intent,
And straightway to the court his footsteps bent;
Cast off his beggar's clothes before the throne,
And, clad in purple, proudly claimed his own;
Cried, in a voice that made the arches ring,
'Hear ye, my people! As I am your king,
My power, crown, my sceptre, and my throne
Go to my youngest son, and him alone!—
Son of my heart, I fold thee to my breast;
Who doth his father's work loves him the best.'

83. THE VICTIM

I

A plague upon the people fell,
A famine after laid them low,
Then thorpe and byre arose in fire,
For on them brake the sudden foe;
So thick they died the people cried,
'The Gods are moved against the land.'
The Priest in horror about his altar
To Thor and Odin lifted a hand:

' Help us from famine
And plague and strife!
What would you have of us?
Human life?
Were it our nearest,
Were it our dearest,
(Answer, O answer)
We give you his life.'

II

But still the foeman spoil'd and burn'd,
And cattle died, and deer in wood,
And bird in air, and fishes turn'd
And whiten'd all the rolling flood;
And dead men lay all over the way,
Or down in a furrow scathed with flame:
And ever and aye the Priesthood moan'd,
Till at last it seem'd that an answer came.
' The King is happy
In child and wife;
Take you his dearest,
Give us a life.'

III

The Priest went out by heath and hill;
The King was hunting in the wild;
They found the mother sitting still;
She cast her arms about the child.
The child was only eight summers old,
His beauty still with his years increased,
His face was ruddy, his hair was gold,
He seem'd a victim due to the priest.
The Priest beheld him,
And cried with joy,
' The Gods have answer'd
We give them the boy.'

IV

The King return'd from out the wild,
He bore but little game in hand ;
The mother said, 'They have taken the child
To spill his blood and heal the land :
The land is sick, the people diseased,
And blight and famine on all the lea :
The holy Gods, they must be appeased,
So I pray you tell the truth to me.
They have taken our son,
They will have his life.
Is *he* your dearest ?
Or I, the wife ?'

V

The King bent low, with hand on brow,
He stay'd his arms upon his knee :
'O wife, what use to answer now?
For now the Priest has judged for me.'
The King was shaken with holy fear ;
'The Gods,' he said, 'would have chosen well ;
Yet both are near, and both are dear,
And which the dearest I cannot tell !'
But the Priest was happy,
His victim won :
'We have his dearest,
His only son !'

VI

The rites prepared, the victim bared,
The knife uprising towards the blow,
To the altar-stone she sprang alone,
'Me, not my darling, no !'
He caught her away with a sudden cry ;
Suddenly from him brake his wife,
And shrieking 'I am his dearest, I—
I am his dearest !' rushed on the knife.

And the Priest was happy,
'O, Father Odin,
We give you a life.
Which was his nearest?
Who was his dearest?
The Gods have answer'd;
We give them the wife!'

A. TENNYSON

84. KING JOHN AND THE ABBOT OF CANTERBURY

An ancient story I'll tell you anon,
Of that notable prince who was called King John;
And the story—albeit a story so merry—
Concerns, too, the Abbot of Canterbury.

A hundred men, the king did hear say,
The Abbot kept in his house every day;
And fifty gold chains, without any doubt,
In velvet coats waited the Abbot about.

'How now, Father Abbot! I hear it of thee
Thou keepest a far better house than we.'
'Nay, nay,' quoth the Abbot, 'I would it were known,
I spend not a farthing that is not my own.'

'Yes, yes, Father Abbot, thy fault it is high;
And now, for the same, thou needest must die,
For, except thou canst answer me questions three,
Thy head from thy body shall smitten be.

'And first, Father Abbot, when I'm in this stead,
And my crown of gold so fair on my head,
Among all my liegemen so noble of birth,
Thou must tell, to one penny, how much I am worth.

'Secondly, tell me, without any doubt,
How soon I may ride the whole world about.
And at the third question thou must not shrink,
But tell to me truly what I do think.'

'Oh, these are hard questions for my shallow wit,
Nor I cannot answer your Majesty yet;
But if you will give me but three weeks' space,
I'll do my endeavour to answer your Grace.'

Away went the Abbot, sad at the King's word,
And he rode to Cambridge and Oxenford;
And never a doctor there was so wise,
That could, with his learning, an answer devise.

Then home rode the Abbot, of comfort so cold,
And he met his Shepherd a-going to fold.
'How now, my Lord Abbot! you are welcome home,
What news do you bring from merry King John?'

'Sad news, sad news, Shepherd, I must give,
I have only three days more to live;
For if I do not answer him questions three,
My head shall be smitten from my body.

'The first is, to tell him, there in that stead,
With his crown of gold so fair on his head,
Among all his liegemen so noble of birth,
To within one penny of what he is worth.

'The second to tell him, without any doubt,
How soon he may ride this whole world about;
And at the third question I must not shrink,
But tell him there truly what he does think.'

'Now cheer up, Sire Abbot! did you never hear yet
That a fool he may learn a wise man wit?
Lend me horse, and serving-men, and your apparel,
And I'll ride to London to answer your quarrel.

'Nay, frown not, for it hath been told unto me,
I am like your Lordship as ever may be.'—
So the Shepherd to London, with retinue great,
And crozier, and mitre, proceeded in state.

'Now welcome, Sire Abbot!' the King he did say;
'Tis well thou'rt come back to keep thy day;
For and if thou canst answer my questions three,
Thy life and thy living both saved shall be.

'And first, when thou seest me here in this stead,
With my crown of gold so fair on my head,
Among all my liegemen so noble of birth,
Tell me, to one penny, what I am worth?'

'A sovereign, your Majesty, minus a crown,
Is worth fifteen shillings of cash paid down,
But twenty-five shillings you're worth, as you stand,
The value of sovereign and crown in this land.'

The King he laughed and vowed in his mirth,
'I did not think I had been so little worth!
Now, secondly tell me, without any doubt,
How soon I may ride this whole world about?'

'You must rise with the sun, and ride with the same,
Until the next morning he riseth aflame;
And then your Grace needs not make any doubt,
That in twenty-four hours you'll ride it about.'

The King he laughed as he'd never have done:
'I could not think, truly, to outride the sun!
Now from the third question thou must not shrink,
But tell, on the instant, what do I think?'

'Yea, that shall I do, and keep your Grace merry;
You think I'm the Abbot of Canterbury;
But I'm his poor Shepherd, as plain you may see,
That am come to beg pardon for him and for me.'

The King he laughed, and swore by his grace,
'I'll make thee Lord Abbot to-day in his place!'
'Nay, nay, my liege, be not in such speed,
For, alack! I can neither write nor read.'

'Four nobles a week then, will I give thee
For this merry jest thou hast shown unto me;
And tell the old Abbot when thou goest home,
Thou hast brought him a pardon from merry King John!'

OLD BALLAD

85. WILLIAM TELL

Come list to me, and you shall hear
A tale of what befell
A famous man of Switzerland:
His name was William Tell.

Near Reuss's bank, from day to day,
His little flock he led,
By prudent thrift and hardy toil
Content to earn his bread.

Nor was the hunter's craft unknown;
In Uri none was seen
To track the rock-frequenting herd
With eye so true and keen.

A little son was in his home,
A laughing, fair-haired boy,
So strong of limb, so blithe of heart,
He made it ring with joy.

His father's sheep were all his friends,
The lambs he called by name,
And, when they frolicked in the fields,
The child would share the game.

So peacefully their hours were spent
That life had scarce a sorrow;
They took the good of every day,
And hoped for more to-morrow.

But oft some shining April morn
Is darkened in an hour;
And blackest griefs o'er joyous homes
Alas! unseen may lower.

Not yet on Switzerland had dawned
Her day of liberty;
The stranger's yoke was on her sons
And pressed right heavily.

So one was sent in luckless hour
To rule in Austria's name;
A haughty man of savage mood—
In pomp and pride he came.

One day, in wantonness of power,
He set his cap on high;—
'Bow down, ye slaves,' the order ran;
'Who disobey shall die!'

It chanced that William Tell that morn
Had left his cottage home,
And, with his little son in hand,
To Altdorf town had come.

Tell saw the crowd, the lifted cap,
The tyrant's angry frown,
And heralds shouted in his ear,
'Bow down, ye slaves, bow down!'

Stern Gessler marked the peasant's mien,
And watched to see him fall;
But never palm-tree straighter stood
Than Tell before them all.

'My knee shall bend,' he calmly said,
'To God, and God alone;
My life is in the Austrian's hand,
My conscience is my own.'

'Seize him, ye guards,' the ruler cried,
While passion choked his breath;
'He mocks my power, he braves my lord,
He dies the traitor's death.

'Yet wait. The Swiss are marksmen true,
So all the world doth say:
That fair-haired stripling hither bring;
We'll try their skill to-day.'

Hard by a spreading lime-tree stood,
To which the youth was bound;
They placed an apple on his head;—
He looked in wonder round.

'The fault is mine, if fault there be,'
Cried Tell in accents wild;
'On manhood let your vengeance fall,
But spare, oh spare my child!'

'I will not harm the pretty boy,'
Said Gessler tauntingly;
'If blood of his shall stain the ground,
Yours will the murder be.

'Draw tight your bow, my cunning man,
Your straightest arrow take;
For, know, yon apple is your mark,
Your liberty the stake.'

A mingled noise of wrath and grief
Was heard among the crowd;
The men, they muttered curses deep,
The women wept aloud.

Full fifty paces from his child,
His cross-bow in his hand,
With lip compressed, and flashing eye
Tell firmly took his stand.

Sure, full enough of pain and woe
This crowded earth has been ;
But never since the curse began,
So sad a sight was seen.

The noble boy stood bravely up
His cheek unblanched with fear ;
'Shoot straight,' he cried, 'thine aim is sure,
It will not fail thee here.'

'Heaven bless thee now,' the parent said,
'Thy courage shames me quite';
Then to his ear the shaft he drew,
And watched its whizzing flight.

'Tis done, 'tis done, the child is safe !'
Shouted the multitude :
'Man tramples on his brother man,
But God is ever good.'

For, sure enough the arrow went
As by an angel guided ;
In pieces two, beneath the tree,
The apple fell divided.

'Twas bravely done,' the ruler said,
'My plighted word I keep ;
'Twas bravely done by sire and son —
Go home and feed your sheep.'

'No thanks I give thee for thy boon,'
The peasant coldly said ;
'To God alone my praise is due,
And duly shall be paid.'

'Yet know, proud man, thy fate was near,
Had I but missed my aim;
Not unavenged my child had died,
Thy parting hour the same,

'For see! a second shaft was here,
If harm my boy befell;
Now go and bless the heavenly powers
My *first* has sped so well.'

God helped the right, God spared the sin;
He brings the proud to shame,
He guards the weak against the strong,—
Praise to His Holy Name!

REV. T. H. GURNEY

86. THE FORCED RECRUIT (*Solferino, 1859*)

In the ranks of the Austrian you found him,
He died with his face to you all;
Yet bury him here where around him
You honour your bravest that fall.

Venetian, fair featured and slender,
He lies shot to death in his youth,
With a smile on his lips, over-tender
For any mere soldier's dead mouth.

No stranger, and yet not a traitor,
Though alien the cloth on his breast;
Underneath it how seldom a greater
Young heart has a shot sent to rest!

By your enemy tortured and goaded
To march with them, stand in their file,
His musket (see) never was loaded,
He facing your guns with that smile!

As orphans yearn on to their mothers,
 He yearned to your patriot bands ;—
 'Let me die for our Italy, brothers,
 If not in your ranks, by your hands !

' Aim straightly, fire steadily ! spare me
 A ball in the body which may
 Deliver my heart here, and tear me
 This badge of the Austrian away !'

So thought he, so died he this morning.
 What then ? many others have died.
 Ay, but easy for men to die scorning
 The death stroke, who fought side by side :—

One tricolor floating above them ;
 Struck down 'mid triumphant acclaims
 Of an Italy rescued to love them
 And blazon the brass with their names.

But he—without witness or honour,
 There, shamed in his country's regard,
 With the tyrants who march in upon her,
 Died faithful and passive : 'twas hard.

'Twas sublime. In a cruel restriction
 Cut off from the guerdon of sons,
 With most filial obedience, conviction,
 His soul kissed the lips of her guns.

That moves you ? Nay, grudge not to show it,
 While digging a grave for him here :
 The others who died, says your poet,
 Have glory,—let him have a tear.

E. B. BROWNING

87. A LEGEND OF THE WISE KING SOLOMON

Out from Jerusalem
The king rode with his great
War chiefs and lords of State,
And Sheba's queen with them.

Proud in the Syrian sun,
In gold and purple sheen,
The dusky Ethiop Queen
Smiled on King Solomon.

Wiseest of men, he knew
The languages of all
The creatures great or small
That trod the earth or flew.

Across an ant-hill led
The King's path, and he heard
Its small folk, and their word
He thus interpreted:

'Here comes the King men greet
As wise and good and just,
To crush us in the dust
Under his heedless feet.'

The great King bowed his head,
And saw the wide surprise
Of the Queen of Sheba's eyes,
As he told her what they said.

'Oh King!' she whispered sweet,
'Too happy fate have they
Who perish in thy way
Beneath thy gracious feet!

'Thou of the God-lent crown,
Shall these vile creatures dare
Murmur against thee where
The knees of kings kneel down?'

'Nay,' Solomon replied,
'The wise and strong should seek
The welfare of the weak';
And turned his horse aside.

His train, with quick alarm,
Curved with their leader round
The ant-hill's peopled mound,
And left it free from harm.

The jewelled head bent low;
'Oh King!' she said, 'henceforth
The secret of thy worth
And wisdom well I know.

'Happy must be the State
Whose ruler heedeth more
The murmurs of the poor
Than flatteries of the great.'

J. G. WHITTIER

88. FIDELITY

A barking sound the shepherd hears,
A cry as of a dog or fox;
He halts—and searches with his eyes
Among the scattered rocks;
And now at distance can discern
A stirring in a brake of fern;
And instantly a dog is seen,
Glancing through that covert green.

The dog is not of mountain breed ;
Its motions, too, are wild and shy ;
With something, as the shepherd thinks,
Unusual in its cry :
Nor is there anyone in sight
All round, in hollow or on height ;
Nor shout, nor whistle strikes his ear ;
What is the creature doing here ?

It was a cove, a huge recess,
That keeps, till June, December's snow ;
A lofty precipice in front,
A silent tarn below !
Far in the bosom of Helvellyn,
Remote from public road or dwelling,
Pathway, or cultivated land ;
From trace of human foot or hand.

There sometimes doth a leaping fish
Send through the tarn a lonely cheer ;
The crags repeat the raven's croak,
In symphony austere ;
Thither the rainbow comes—the cloud—
And mists that spread the flying shroud ;
And sunbeams ; and the sounding blast,
That, if it could, would hurry past ;
But that enormous barrier binds it fast.

Not free from boding thoughts, a while
The shepherd stood ; then makes his way
Towards the dog, o'er rocks and stones,
As quickly as he may ;
Nor far had gone before he found
A human skeleton on the ground ;
The appalled discoverer with a sigh
Looks round, to learn the history.

From those abrupt and perilous rocks
The man had fallen, that place of fear!
At length upon the shepherd's mind
It breaks, and all is clear:
He instantly recalled the name,
And who he was, and whence he came;
Remembered, too, the very day
On which the traveller passed that way.

But hear a wonder, for whose sake
This lamentable tale I tell!
A lasting monument of words
This wonder merits well.
The dog, which still was hovering nigh,
Repeating the same timid cry,
This dog, had been through three months' space
A dweller in that savage place.

Yes, proof was plain that, since the day
When this ill-fated traveller died,
The dog had watch'd about the spot,
Or by his master's side:
How nourished there through that long time
He knows, who gave that love sublime;
And gave that strength of feeling, great
Above all human estimate.

W. WORDSWORTH

89. SOLOMON AND THE BEES

When Solomon was reigning in his glory,
Unto his throne the Queen of Sheba came—
(So in the Talmud you may read the story)—
Drawn by the magic of the monarch's fame,
To see the splendours of his court, and bring
Some fitting tribute to the mighty King.

Nor this alone: much had her Highness heard
What flowers of learning graced the royal speech,
What gems of wisdom dropped with every word,
What wholesome lessons he was wont to teach
In pleasing proverbs; and she wished, in sooth,
To know if Rumour spoke the simple truth.

Besides, the Queen had heard (which piqued her most)
How through the deepest riddles he could spy;
How all the curious arts that women boast
Were quite transparent to his piercing eye;
And so the Queen had come—a royal guest—
To put the sage's cunning to the test.

And straight she held before the monarch's view,
In either hand, a radiant wreath of flowers;
The one, bedecked with every charming hue,
Was newly culled from Nature's choicest bowers;
The other, no less fair in every part,
Was the rare product of divinest Art.

'Which is the true, and which the false?' she said.
Great Solomon was silent. All amazed,
Each wondering courtier shook his puzzled head;
While at the garlands long the monarch gazed,
As one who sees a miracle, and fain,
For very rapture, ne'er would speak again.

'Which is the true?' once more the woman asked,
Pleased at the fond amazement of the King;
'So wise a head should not be hardly tasked,
Most learned Liege, with such a trivial thing!'
But still the sage was silent; it was plain
A deepening doubt perplexed the royal brain.

While thus he pondered presently he sees,
Hard by the casement—so the story goes—
A little band of busy, bustling bees,
Hunting for honey in a withered rose.
The monarch smiled, and raised his royal head;
'Open the window!'—that was all he said.

The window opened at the King's command;
Within the rooms the eager insects flew,
And sought the flowers in Sheba's dexter hand!
And so the King and all the courtiers knew
That wreath was Nature's: and the baffled Queen
Returned to tell the wonders she had seen.

My story teaches (every tale should bear
A fitting moral) that the wise may find
In trifles light as atoms of the air
Some useful lesson to enrich the mind—
Some truth designed to profit or to please—
As Israel's King learned wisdom from the bees.

J. G. SAXE

90. THE PRIEST AND THE MULBERRY-TREE

Did you hear of the curate who mounted his mare,
And merrily trotted along to the fair?
Of creature more tractable none ever heard,
In the height of her speed she would stop at a word;
But again with a word, when the curate said, Hey,
She put forth her mettle and gallop'd away.

As near to the gates of the city he rode,
While the sun of September all brilliantly glow'd,
The good priest discover'd, with eyes of desire,
A mulberry-tree in a hedge of wild briar;
On boughs long and lofty, in many a green shoot,
Hung large, black, and glossy, the beautiful fruit.

The curate was hungry and thirsty to boot;
He shrunk from the thorns, though he long'd for the fruit;
With a word he arrested his courser's keen speed,
And he stood up erect on the back of his steed;
On the saddle he stood while the creature stood still,
And he gather'd the fruit till he took his good fill.

'Sure never,' he thought, 'was a creature so rare,
So docile, so true, as my excellent mare.
Lo, here now I stand,' and he gazed all around,
'As safe and as steady as if on the ground;
Yet how had it been, if some traveller this way,
Had, dreaming no mischief, but chanced to cry, Hey?'

He stood with his head in the mulberry-tree,
And he spoke out aloud in his fond reverie,
At the sound of the word the good mare made a push,
And down went the priest in the wild-briar bush.
He remember'd too late, on his thorny green bed,
Much that well may be thought cannot wisely be said.

T. L. PEACOCK

91. CURFEW MUST NOT RING TO-NIGHT

Slowly England's sun was setting
O'er the hill-tops far away,
Filling all the land with beauty
At the close of one sad day,
And the last rays kissed the foreheads
Of a man and maiden fair,
He with footsteps slow and weary—
She with sunny, floating hair.

'Sexton,' Bessie's white lips faltered,
Pointing to the prison old,
With its turrets tall and gloomy,
With its walls dark, damp, and cold,
'I've a lover in that prison,
Doomed this very night to die
At the ringing of the curfew,
And no earthly help is nigh!
'Cromwell will not come till sunset,'
And her lips grew strangely white,
As she breathed the husky whisper—
'Curfew must not ring to-night.'

'Long, long years I've rung the curfew,
From that gloomy, shadow'd tow'r;
Every evening, just at sunset,
It has told the twilight hour;
I have done my duty ever,
Tried to do it just and right,
Now I'm old, I still must do it;
Curfew, it must ring to-night.'

Wild her eyes and pale her features,
Stern and white her thoughtful brow,
And within her secret bosom
Bessie made a solemn vow.
She had listened while the judges
Read without a tear or sigh,
'At the ringing of the curfew
Basil Underwood must die.'
And her breath came fast and faster,
And her eyes grew large and bright;
In an undertone she murmured,
'Curfew must not ring to-night.'

Not a moment paused the maiden,
But with eye and cheek aglow
Mounted up the gloomy tower,
Where the bell swung to and fro,
As she climbed the dusty ladder
On which fell no ray of light,
Up and up, her white lips saying,
'Curfew shall not ring to-night.'

She has reached the topmost ladder,
O'er her hangs the great dark bell;
Awful is the gloom beneath her,
Darker than the tongue can tell!
Lo, the ponderous tongue is swinging,
'Tis the hour of curfew now,
And the sight has chilled her bosom,
Stopped her breath, and paled her brow.

Shall she let it ring? No, never!
Flash her eyes with sudden light,
And she springs and grasps it firmly—
‘Curfew must not ring to-night.’

And the sexton at the bell-rope,
Old and deaf, heard not the bell,
But he thought it still was ringing
Fair young Basil’s funeral knell.
Still the maiden clung more firmly,
And with trembling lips and white,
Said, to hush her heart’s wild beating,
‘Curfew shall not ring to-night.’

It was o’er; the bell ceased swaying;
And the maiden stepped once more
Firmly on the dark cold ladder,
Where for hundred years before
Human foot had not been planted—
The brave deed that she had done
Should be told long ages after,
As the rays of setting sun
Should illumine the sky with beauty;
Aged sires, with heads of white,
Long should tell the little children
Curfew did not ring that night.

O’er the distant hills came Cromwell;
Bessie sees him, and her brow,
Full of hope and full of gladness,
Has no anxious traces now.
At his feet she tells her story,
Shows her hands all bruised and torn;
And her face, so sweet and pleading,
Yet with sorrow pale and worn,
Touched his heart with sudden pity,
Lit his eye with misty light;
‘Go! your lover lives,’ said Cromwell:
‘Curfew shall not ring to-night.’

ROSE HARTWICK THORPE

92. ROSABELLE

O listen, listen, ladies gay !

No haughty feat of arms I tell ;
Soft is the note, and sad the lay
That mourns the lovely Rosabelle.

'Moor, moor the barge, ye gallant crew !
And, gentle lady, deign to stay !
Rest thee in Castle Ravensheuch,
Nor tempt the stormy firth to-day.

'The blackening wave is edged with white ;
To inch and rock the sea-mews fly ;
The fishers have heard the Water-Sprite,
Whose screams forebode that wreck is nigh.

'Last night the gifted Seer did view
A wet shroud swathed round lady gay ;
Then stay thee, Fair, in Ravensheuch ;
Why cross the gloomy firth to-day ?

'Tis not because Lord Lindesay's heir
To-night at Roslin leads the ball,
But that my lady-mother there
Sits lonely in her castle-hall.

'Tis not because the ring they ride,
And Lindesay at the ring rides well,
But that my sire the wine will chide
If 'tis not fill'd by Rosabelle.'

—O'er Roslin all that dreary night
A wondrous blaze was seen to gleam ;
'Twas broader than the watch-fire's light,
And redder than the bright moonbeam.

It glared on Roslin's castled rock,
It ruddied all the copse-wood glen;
'Twas seen from Dryden's groves of oak,
And seen from cavern'd Hawthornden.

Seem'd all on fire that chapel proud
Where Roslin's chief uncoffin'd lie,
Each Baron, for a sable shroud,
Sheathed in his iron panoply.

Seem'd all on fire within, around,
Deep sacristy and altar's pale;
Shone every pillar foliage-bound,
And glimmer'd all the dead men's mail.

Blazed battlement and pinnet high,
Blazed every rose-carved buttress fair —
So still they blaze, when fate is nigh
The lordly line of high Saint Clair.

There are twenty of Roslin's barons bold —
Lie buried within that proud chapelle;
Each one the holy vault doth hold —
But the sea holds lovely Rosabelle.

And each Saint Clair was buried there,
With candle, with book, and with knell;
But the sea-caves rung, and the wild winds sung
The dirge of lovely Rosabelle.

SIR W. SCOTT

93. THE LORD OF BURLEIGH

In her ear he whispers gaily,
'If my heart by signs can tell,
Maiden, I have watch'd thee daily,
And I think thou lov'st me well.'

She replies, in accents fainter,
‘There is none I love like thee.’
He is but a landscape-painter,
And a village maiden she.
He to lips, that fondly falter,
Presses his without reproof:
Leads her to the village altar,
And they leave her father’s roof.
‘I can make no marriage present:
Little can I give my wife.
Love will make our cottage pleasant,
And I love thee more than life.’
They by parks and lodges going
See the lordly castles stand:
Summer woods, about them blowing,
Made a murmur in the land.
From deep thought himself he rouses,
Says to her that loves him well,
‘Let us see these handsome houses
Where the wealthy nobles dwell.’
So she goes by him attended,
Hears him lovingly converse,
Sees whatever fair and splendid
Lay betwixt his home and hers;
Parks with oak and chestnut shady,
Parks and order’d gardens great,
Ancient homes of lord and lady,
Built for pleasure and for state.
All he shows her makes him dearer:
Evermore she seems to gaze
On that cottage growing nearer,
Where they twain will spend their days.
O, but she will love him truly!
He shall have a cheerful home;
She will order all things duly,
When beneath his roof they come.

Thus her heart rejoices greatly,
Till a gateway she discerns
With armorial bearings stately,
And beneath the gate she turns;
Sees a mansion more majestic
Than all those she saw before;
Many a gallant gay domestic
Bows before him at the door.
And they speak in gentle murmur,
When they answer to his call,
While he treads with footsteps firmer,
Leading on from hall to hall.
And while now she wonders blindly,
Nor the meaning can divine,
Proudly turns he round and kindly,
'All of this is mine and thine.'
Here he lives in state and bounty,
Lord of Burleigh, fair and free,
Not a lord in all the county
Is so great a lord as he.
All at once the colour flushes
Her sweet face from brow to chin:
As it were with shame she blushes,
And her spirit changed within.
Then her countenance all over
Pale again as death did prove:
But he clasp'd her like a lover,
And he cheer'd her soul with love.
So she strove against her weakness,
Tho' at times her spirit sank:
Shaped her heart with woman's meekness
To all duties of her rank;
And a gentle consort made he,
And her gentle mind was such
That she grew a noble lady,
And the people loved her much.

But a trouble weigh'd upon her,
 And perplex'd her, night and morn,
 With the burthen of an honour
 Unto which she was not born.
 Faint she grew, and ever fainter,
 And she murmur'd, 'Oh, that he
 Were once more that landscape-painter,
 Which did win my heart from me !'
 So she droop'd and droop'd before him,
 Fading slowly from his side :
 Three fair children first she bore him,
 Then before her time she died.
 Weeping, weeping late and early,
 Walking up and pacing down,
 Deeply mourn'd the Lord of Burleigh,
 Burleigh-house by Stamford-town.
 And he came to look upon her,
 And he look'd at her and said,
 'Bring the dress and put it on her,
 That she wore when she was wed.'
 Then her people, softly treading,
 Bore to earth her body, drest
 In the dress that she was wed in,
 That her spirit might have rest.

A. TENNYSON

94. EARL MARCH LOOK'D ON HIS DYING CHILD

Earl March look'd on his dying child,
 And, smit with grief to view her—
 The youth, he cried, whom I exiled
 Shall be restored to woo her.

She's at the window many an hour
 His coming to discover :
 And he look'd up to Ellen's bower
 And she look'd on her lover—

But ah! so pale, he knew her not,
Though her smile on him was dwelling —
And am I then forgot — forgot?
It broke the heart of Ellen.

In vain he weeps, in vain he sighs,
Her cheek is cold as ashes;
Nor love's own kiss shall wake those eyes
To lift their silken lashes.

T. CAMPBELL

95. THE MAID OF NEIDPATH

O lovers' eyes are sharp to see,
And lovers' ears in hearing;
And love, in life's extremity,
Can lend an hour of cheering.
Disease had been in Mary's bower
And slow decay from mourning,
Though now she sits on Neidpath's tower
To watch her Love's returning.

All sunk and dim her eyes so bright,
Her form decay'd by pining,
Till through her wasted hand, at night,
You saw the taper shining.
By fits a sultry hectic hue
Across her cheek was flying;
By fits so ashy pale she grew
Her maidens thought her dying.

Yet keenest powers to see and hear
Seem'd in her frame residing;
Before the watch-dog prick'd his ear
She heard her lover's riding;
Ere scarce a distant form was kenn'd
She knew and waved to greet him,
And o'er the battlement did bend
As on the wing to meet him.

He came—he pass'd—an heedless gaze
As o'er some stranger glancing;
Her welcome, spoke in faltering phrase,
Lost in his courser's prancing—
The castle-arch, whose hollow tone
Returns each whisper spoken,
Could scarcely catch the feeble moan
Which told her heart was broken.

SIR W. SCOTT

96. KING LEAR AND HIS THREE DAUGHTERS

King Lear once ruled in this land with princely power and
peace,
And had all things with heart's content, that might his
joys increase.
Amongst those things that nature gave, three daughters
fair had he,
So princely seeming, beautiful, as fairer could not be.

So on a time it pleased the king a question thus to move,
Which of his daughters to his grace could show the
dearest love;
'For to my age you bring content,' quoth he; 'then let
me hear,
Which of you three in plighted troth the kindest will
appear.'

To whom the eldest thus began: 'Dear father mine,'
quoth she,
'Before your face, to do you good, my blood shall
render'd be;
And for your sake my bleeding heart shall here be cut in
twain,
Ere that I see your reverend age the smallest grief sustain.'

'And so will I,' the second said, 'dear father, for your sake,
The worst of all extremities I'll gently undertake,
And serve your highness night and day with diligence and love,
That sweet content and quietness discomforts may remove.'

'In doing so, you glad my soul,' the aged king replied;
'But what sayst thou, my youngest girl; how is thy love
allied?'
'My love' (quoth young Cordelia then), 'which to your
grace I owe,
Shall be the duty of a child, and that is all I'll show.'

'And wilt thou show no more,' quoth he, 'than doth
thy duty bind?
I well perceive thy love is small, whenas no more I find.
Henceforth I banish thee my court; thou art no child of mine,
Nor any part of this my realm by favour shall be thine.

'Thy elder sisters' loves are more than I can well demand,
To whom I equally bestow my kingdom and my land,
My pompous state and all my goods, that lovingly I may
With those thy sisters be maintain'd until my dying day.'

Thus flattering speeches won renown by these two sisters here;
The third had causeless banishment, yet was her love
more dear:
For poor Cordelia patiently went wandering up and down,
Unhelped, unpitied, gentle maid, through many an English
town.

Until at last in famous France she gentler fortunes found;
Though poor and bare, yet she was deem'd the fairest on
the ground.
Where, when the king her virtues heard, and this fair lady seen,
With full consent of all his court, he made her wife and queen.

Her father, old King Lear, this while with his two daughters
stay'd ;

Forgetful of their promised loves, full soon the same decay'd ;
And living in Queen Regan's court, the eldest of the twain,
She took from him his chiefest means, and most of all his train.

For whereas twenty men were wont to wait with bended knee,
She gave allowance but to ten, and after scarce to three ;
Nay, one she thought too much for him ; so took she all away
In hope that in her court, good king, he would no longer stay.

' Am I rewarded thus,' quoth he, ' in giving all I have
Unto my children, and to beg for what I lately gave ?
I'll go unto my Gonorel : my second child, I know,
Will be more kind and pitiful, and will relieve my woe.'

Full fast he hies, then, to her court ; who when she heard
his moan,
Return'd him answer that she griev'd that all his means
were gone :

But no way could relieve his wants ; yet, if that he would stay
Within her kitchen, he should have what scullions gave away.

When he had heard, with bitter tears he made his answer then ;
' In what I did, let me be made example to all men.
I will return again,' quoth he, ' unto my Regan's court ;
She will not use me thus, I hope, but in a kinder sort.'

Where when he came she gave command to drive him
thence away ;
When he was well within her court, she said, he would not stay.
Then back again to Gonorel the woeful king did hie,
That in her kitchen he might have what scullion boys set by.

But there of that he was denied, which she had promised late :
For once refusing, he should not come after to her gate.
Thus 'twixt his daughters for relief he wandered up and down ;
Being glad to feed on beggar's food, that lately wore a crown.

And calling to remembrance then his youngest daughter's words,
That said the duty of a child was all that love affords,
But doubting to repair to her whom he had banish'd so,
Grew frantic mad, for in his mind he bore the wounds of woe :

Which made him rend his milk-white locks and tresses
from his head,
And all with blood bestain his cheeks with age and honour
spread.
To hills and woods and watery founts he made his hourly
moan,
Till hills and woods and senseless things did seem to sigh
and groan.

Even thus possess'd with discontents, he passéd o'er to
France,
In hopes from fair Cordelia there to find some gentler
chance ;
Most virtuous dame ! which when she heard of this her
father's grief,
As duty bound, she quickly sent him comfort and relief ;

And by a train of noble peers, in brave and gallant sort,
She gave in charge he should be brought to Aganippus'
court ;
Whose royal king, with noble mind, so freely gave consent
To muster up his knights at arms, to fame and courage
bent ;

And so to England came with speed, to repossess King
Lear,
And drive his daughters from their thrones by his
Cordelia dear ;
Where she, true-hearted, noble queen, was in the battle
slain ;
Yet he, good king, in his old days, possess'd his crown again.

But when he heard Cordelia's death, who died indeed for
love

Of her dear father, in whose cause this battle she did move,
He, swooning, fell upon her breast, from whence he never
parted,

But on her bosom left his life, which was so truly hearted.

The lords and ladies, when they saw the end of these events,
The other sisters unto death they dooméd by consents :
And, being dead, their crowns they left unto the next-of-kin :
Thus have you seen the fall of pride and disobedient sin.

OLD BALLAD

97. ALICE BRAND

I

Merry it is in the good greenwood,
When the mavis and merle are singing,
When the deer sweeps by, and the hounds are in cry,
And the hunter's horn is ringing.

'O Alice Brand, my native land
Is lost for love of you;
And we must hold by wood and wold,
As outlaws wont to do!

'O Alice, 'twas all for thy locks so bright,
And 'twas all for thine eyes so blue,
That on the night of our luckless flight,
Thy brother bold I slew.

'Now must I teach to hew the beech
The hand that held the glaive,
For leaves to spread our lowly bed,
And stakes to fence our cave.

'And for vest of pall, thy fingers small,
That wont on harp to stray,
A cloak must shear from the slaughter'd deer,
To keep the cold away.'—

—'O Richard! if my brother died,
'Twas but a fatal chance:
For darkling was the battle tried,
And fortune sped the lance.

'If pall and vair no more I wear,
Nor thou the crimson sheen,
As warm, we'll say, is the russet gray,
As gay the forest-green.

'And, Richard, if our lot be hard,
And lost thy native land,
Still Alice has her own Richard,
And he his Alice Brand.'

II

'Tis merry, 'tis merry, in good greenwood,
So blithe Lady Alice is singing;
On the beech's pride, and oak's brown side,
Lord Richard's axe is ringing.

Up spoke the moody Elfin King,—
Who wonn'd within the hill,—
Like wind in the porch of a ruin'd church,
His voice was ghostly shrill.

'Why sounds yon stroke on beech and oak
Our moonlight circle's screen?
Or who comes here to chase the deer,
Beloved of our Elfin Queen?
Or who may dare on wold to wear
The fairies' fatal green?

'Up, Urgan, up! to yon mortal hie,
For thou wert christen'd man:
For cross or sign thou wilt not fly,
For mutter'd word or ban.

'Lay on him the curse of the wither'd heart,
The curse of the sleepless eye;
Till he wish and pray that his life would part,
Nor yet find leave to die!'

III

'Tis merry, 'tis merry, in good greenwood,
Though the birds have still'd their singing;
The evening blaze doth Alice raise,
And Richard is fagots bringing.

Up Urgan starts, that hideous dwarf,
Before Lord Richard stands,
And as he cross'd and bless'd himself,
'I fear not sign,' quoth the grisly elf,
'That is made with bloody hands.'

But out then spoke she, Alice Brand,
That woman void of fear,—
'And if there's blood upon his hand,
'Tis but the blood of deer.'

—'Now loud thou liest, thou bold of mood!
It cleaves unto his hand,
The stain of thine own kindly blood,
The blood of Ethert Brand.'

Then forward stepp'd she, Alice Brand,
And made the holy sign,—
'And if there's blood on Richard's hand,
A spotless hand is mine.

'And I conjure thee, Demon elf,
By Him whom Demons fear,
To show us whence thou art thyself,
And what thine errand here.'

IV

—'Tis merry, 'tis merry, in Fairy-land,
When fairy birds are singing,
When the court doth ride by their monarch's side,
With bit and bridle ringing :

'And gaily shines the Fairy-land —
But all is glistening show,
Like the idle gleam that December's beam
Can dart on ice and snow.

'And fading, like that varied gleam,
Is our inconstant shape,
Who now like knight and lady seem,
And now like dwarf and ape.

'It was between the night and day,
When the Fairy King has power,
That I sunk down in a sinful fray,
And 'twixt life and death, was snatch'd away
To the joyless Elfin bower.

'But wist I of a woman bold,
Who thrice my brow durst sign,
I might regain my mortal mould,
As fair a form as thine.'

She cross'd him once—she cross'd him twice—
That lady was so brave;
The fouler grew his goblin hue,
The darker grew the cave.

She cross'd him thrice, that lady bold!

—He rose beneath her hand

The fairest knight on Scottish mould,

Her brother, Ethert Brand!

—Merry it is in good greenwood,

When the mavis and merle are singing;

But merrier were they in Dumfermline gray

When all the bells were ringing.

SIR W. SCOTT

98. MARY, THE MAID OF THE INN

Who is yonder poor maniac, whose wildly fixed eyes

Seem a heart overcharged to express?

She weeps not, yet often and deeply she sighs;

She never complains, but her silence implies

The composure of settled distress.

No pity she looks for, no alms doth she seek;

Nor for raiment nor food doth she care;

Through her tatters the winds of the winter blow bleak

On that withered breast, and her weather-worn cheek

Hath the hue of a mortal despair.

Yet cheerful and happy, nor distant the day,

Poor Mary the maniac hath been;

The traveller remembers, who journeyed this way,

No damsel so lovely, no damsel so gay,

As Mary, the Maid of the Inn.

Her cheerful address filled the guests with delight,

As she welcomed them in with a smile;

Her heart was stranger to childish affright,

And Mary would walk by the Abbey at night,

When the wind whistled down the dark aisle.

She loved, and young Richard had settled the day,
And she hoped to be happy for life:
But Richard was idle and worthless, and they
Who knew him would pity poor Mary, and say,
That she was too good for his wife.

'Twas in autumn, and stormy and dark was the night;
And fast were the windows and door;
Two guests sat enjoying the fire that burnt bright,
And smoking in silence with tranquil delight,
They listened to hear the wind roar.

'Tis pleasant,' cried one, 'seated by the fireside,
To hear the wind whistle without.'
'What a night for the Abbey!' his comrade replied,
'Methinks a man's courage would now be well tried,
Who should wander the ruins about.

'I myself, like a schoolboy, should tremble to hear
The hoarse ivy shake over my head;
And could fancy I saw, half-persuaded by fear,
Some ugly old Abbot's grim spirit appear,
For this wind might awaken the dead!'

'I'll wager a dinner,' the other one cried,
'That Mary would venture there now.'
'Then wager, and lose!' with a sneer he replied,
'I'll warrant she'd fancy a ghost by her side,
And faint if she saw a white cow.'

'Will Mary this charge on her courage allow?'
His companion exclaimed with a smile;
'I shall win, for I know she will venture there now,
And earn a new bonnet by bringing a bough
From the elder that grows in the aisle.'

With fearless good humour did Mary comply,
And her way to the Abbey she bent;
The night it was gloomy, the wind it was high;
And, as hollowly howling it swept through the sky,
She shivered with cold as she went.

O'er the path, so well known, still proceeded the maid,
Where the Abbey rose dim on the sight;
Through the gateway she entered—she felt not afraid,
Yet the ruins were lonely and wild, and their shade
Seemed to deepen the gloom of the night.

All around her was silent, save when the rude blast
Howled dismally round the old pile;
Over weed-covered fragments still fearless she passed,
And arrived at the innermost ruin at last,
Where the elder-tree grew in the aisle.

Well pleased did she reach it, and quickly drew near,
And hastily gathered the bough;
When the sound of a voice seemed to rise on her ear,
She paused, and she listened intently to hear,
And her heart panted painfully now.

The wind blew, the hoarse ivy shook over her head,
She listened—nought else could she hear;
The wind fell; her heart sunk in her bosom with dread,
For she heard in the ruins, distinctly, the tread
Of footsteps approaching her near.

Behind a wide column, half breathless with fear,
She crept to conceal herself there:
That instant the moon o'er a dark cloud shone clear,
And she saw in the moonlight two ruffians appear,
And between them a corpse did they bear.

Then Mary could feel her heart-blood curdle cold,
Again the rough wind hurried by,—
It blew off the hat of the one, and behold!
Even close to the feet of poor Mary it rolled;
She felt—and expected to die.

‘Curse the hat!’ he exclaims. ‘Nay, come on till we hide
The dead body,’ his comrade replies.
She beholds them in safety pass on by her side,
She seizes the hat, fear her courage supplied,
And fast through the Abbey she flies.

She ran with wild speed, she rushed in at the door,
She gazed in her terror around;
Then her limbs could support their faint burden no more,
And exhausted and breathless she sunk on the floor,
Unable to utter a sound.

Ere yet her pale lips could the story impart,
For a moment the hat met her view;
Her eyes from that object convulsively start,
For—what a cold horror then thrilled through her heart,
When the name of her Richard she knew!

Where the old Abbey stands, on the common hard by,
His gibbet is now to be seen;
His irons you still from the road may espy;
The traveller beholds them, and thinks with a sigh
Of poor Mary, the Maid of the Inn.

R. SOUTHEY

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